

Esthetics and Ethics.

Notes on the History of Their Separation as Concepts in Medieval Europe

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Les paroles sont comme les images des pensées :

Ce sont des couleurs qui les rendent sensibles

Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde

1. Introduction

The Middle Ages have long been accused for their lack of systematic and formalised esthetic and ethical theories, despite the recognised existence of a variety of scattered statements which can be related to esthetics and ethics in the one or the other sense of the terms. Most historians of philosophical theory have therefore treated medieval esthetics¹ and ethics² no more than in passing. In these works, the early Middle Ages have received

¹ For general surveys on the history of esthetics see : Raymond Bayer, *Histoire de l'esthétique* (Paris, 1961). Monroe C. Beardsley, Elizabeth Lane Beardsley, *Aesthetics. From Classical Greece to the Present* (New York, 1965). Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetics* (London 1904). Benedetto Croce, *Estetica come scienze de l' espressione e linguistica generale* (Milan, 1902) [English version (London, 1909)]. Katherine Everett Gilbert, Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics* (New York, 1939) [revised ed. (Bloomington, 1953)]. Hans Robert Jauss, "Ästhetische Normen und geschichtliche Reflexion in der 'querelle des Anciens et des Modernes'", in : Jauss, ed., Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (Munich, 1964), pp. 8-66. Franz von Kutschera, *Ästhetik* (Berlin, New York, 1988), esp. his definition of esthetics on p. 1. Götz Pochat, *Der Symbolbegriff in der Ästhetik und Kunstwissenschaft* (Cologne, 1983). Pochat, *Geschichte der Ästhetik und Kunsttheorie* (Cologne, 1987). Joachim Ritter, Art. "Ästhetik, ästhetisch", in : Ritter, ed. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, Basle, 1972), pp. 555-580. Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *The History of Aesthetics*, ed. C. Barrett, vol. 2 (The Hague, Paris, 1972). Robert Zimmermann, *Geschichte der Aesthetik als philosophische Wissenschaft* (Vienna, 1858). Only a few works are devoted to the Middle Ages in total. See : Rosario Assunto, *Die Theorie des Schönen im Mittelalter* (Cologne, 1963) [first published (Milan, 1961)]. Edgar de Bruyne, *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale*, 3 vols (Bruges, 1946) [Spanish version (Madrid, 1958)]. Bruyne, *L'esthétique du Moyen Age* (Louvain, 1947) [English version (New York, 1969)]. Bruyne, *Geschiedenis van de Aesthetica*, 5 vols (Antwerp, 1951-1955) [Spanish version (Madrid, 1958)]. Umberto Eco, "Sviluppo dell'estetica medievale", in : *Momenti e problemi di storia dell'estetica*, vol. 1 (Milan, 1959), pp. 115-229. Hans Hermann Glunz, *Die Literaturästhetik des europäischen Mittelalters. Wolfram, Rosenroman, Chaucer, Dante* (Bochum, 1937) [2nd ed. (Frankfurt, 1963)]. Wilhelm Perpeet, *Ästhetik des Mittelalters* (Freiburg, 1973).

² Scott Davis, Scott MacDonald, Jill Krayer, "History of Western Ethics", chap. 5,6,7, in : *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, vol. 1 (New York, London, 1992), pp. 480-500. Wilhelm Dilthey, "Auffassung und Analyse des Menschen im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert", in : Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1957; reed. 1969), p. 1-89. Ottmar Dittrich, *Geschichte der Ethik*, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1926) [repr. (Aalen, 1964)].

virtually no attention,³ and from the later Middle Ages only a few more prolific authors, among them Peter Abelard, St Thomas Aquinas, William Ockham and John Duns Scotus have been subjected to closer scrutiny.⁴ The most persuasive justification for this approach has always been drawn from the conceptual histories of the terms esthetics and ethics. Indeed, although it can hardly be denied that esthetic thought existed during the Middle Ages, even without necessarily being recorded in writing,⁵ the word esthetics was invented only in the middle of the eighteenth century⁶ and did not become generally

Wilhelm Gass, *Geschichte der christlichen Ethik*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1881). Friedrich Jodl, *Geschichte der Ethik*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1882) [repr. of the 4th ed. of 1929 (Essen, 1995)]. Alasdair McIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (London, 1990). Hermann Reuter, *Geschichte der religiösen Aufklärung im Mittelalter vom Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts bis zum Anfange des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1875-1877). Joachim Ritter, R. Romberg Art. "Ethik", in: Ritter, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, new ed., vol. 2 (Stuttgart, Basle, 1972), pp. 759-810. Jan Rohls, *Geschichte der Ethik*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen, 1999) [first published (1991)]. Jerome B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge, 1999). Claus Uhlig, "Moral und Politik in der europäischen Hoferziehung", in: *Literatur als Kritik des Lebens. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Ludwig Borinski* (Heidelberg, 1975), pp. 27-51. Maurice Marie Charles Joseph de Wulf, *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Philosophie* (Tübingen, 1913). Only a few works are specifically focused on medieval ethics. See: Alois Dempf, *Ethik des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1927). Heinrich von Eicken, *Geschichte und System der mittelalterlichen Weltanschauung*, 4th ed. (Munich, 1927) [first published (1887); repr. (Aalen, 1964)]. Odon Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, 6 vols (Louvain, Gembloux, 1942-1960). Walter Müller, *Das Problem der Seelenschönheit im Mittelalter* (Bern, 1923).

³ An exception is the work of John Scotus Eriugena, the ninth-century theologian whose views on esthetics and ethics have won some appraisal. See: Henry Bett, *Johannes Scotus Eriugena* (Cambridge, 1925).

⁴ John F. Boter, "Ockham on Evident Cognition", in: *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1978), pp. 85-98. John Leonard Callahan, *A Theory of Aesthetics according to the Principles of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC, 1927). Samuel Martin Deutsch, *Peter Abälard, ein kritischer Theologe des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1883). Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge, MA, 1988) [first published Milan, 1970]. Wilhelm Gass, "Zur Geschichte der Ethik", in: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 1 (1877), pp. 332-296, 510-530. Bruno Hiller, *Abälard als Ethiker*, Phil. Diss. (Erlangen University, 1900). Mary McLaughlin, "Abelard as Autobiographer. The Motives and Meaning of His 'Story of Calamities'", in: *Speculum* 42 (1967), pp. 463-488. Joseph Mausbach, *Die Ethik des heiligen Augustinus* (Freiburg, 1909). Marc de Munnynck, "L'esthétique de St. Thomas d'Aquin", in: *San Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan, 1923), pp. 217-239. Oscar Renz, *Die Synteresis nach dem hl. Thomas von Aquin* (Munster, 1911). Marie Dominique Roland-Gosselin, *La Morale de St. Augustin* (Paris, 1925) (Etudes philosophiques. 4.) Josef Schiller, *Abälards Ethik im Vergleich zur Ethik seiner Zeit* (Munich, 1906). Friedrich Wagner, *Das natürliche Sittengesetz nach der Lehre des hl. Thomas von Aquino* (Berlin, 1911). Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality* (Washington, DC, 1986).

⁵ Pochat, *Geschichte* (note 1), p. 11.

⁶ Karlheinz Barck, "'Ästhetik'. Wandel ihres Begriffs im Kontext verschiedener Disziplinen und unterschiedlicher Wissenschaftskulturen / Martin Fontius, "Kommentar", in: Gunter Scholtz, ed., *Die Interdisziplinarität der Begriffsgeschichte* (Hamburg, 2000), pp. 55-65 (Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte. Sonderheft 2000.) Johannes Irmischer, "Die Anfänge des Begriffs Ästhetik", in: *Ästhetik und Urgeschichte. Kolloquium der Leibniz-Sozietät zum 90. Geburtstag von Georg Knepler* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 35-37 (Sitzungsberichte der Leibniz-Sozietät 25, 6.) Ignaz Jetteles, Art. "Aesthetik", in: Jetteles, ed., *Aesthetisches Wörterbuch* (Vienna, 1839), pp. 18-19 [repr. (Hildesheim, New York, 1978)]. The earliest use of the word esthetics in mid eighteenth-century German philosophy still carried with it the meaning of the ancient Greek original *αισθητικα* and was equated with "cognitio sensitiva", that is, perception. See: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Theoretische Ästhetik*, ed. by Hans Rudolf Schwe-

applied as a term for a field of philosophical study until the nineteenth century.⁷ It has since then been considered as a means to determine the criteria for judgments of beauty, largely in the context of the theory of art. Likewise, ethics, although the word was in use already in Greek Antiquity, was not considered to be a field of study of its own until the sixteenth century. This was so because ethics then remained embedded in the intellectual efforts of making and maintaining Christian theological doctrine.⁸ After cautious attempts at its secularisation in the work of Justus Lipsius, who, at the end of the sixteenth century, tried to construct humankind rationalistically as a metaphysical source of moral norms, ethics has emerged as a branch of practical philosophy and a branch of practical theology from the seventeenth century.⁹ It has since then been regarded as a means to determine the meaning of the good and as a theory of justice and moral action. In the Middle Ages, however, esthetics and ethics were closely associated with each other as many authors treated both subjects simultaneously. Despite difference in detail, the professionalisation of esthetics and ethics was a comparatively late and, in any case, post-medieval process. In consequence of this professionalisation, the lack of focus, which had been characteristic of medieval esthetics and ethics, has become discredited, and investigations into the interconnectedness of esthetics and ethics have met with substantive and increasing skepticism.

izer (Hamburg, 1983), pp. 10-12 [newly and partly ed. from Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, vol. I, Pars I, cap. 7, paragr. 7 (Frankfurt, 1750)]. Cf.: Ernst Bergmann, *Die Begründung der deutschen Ästhetik durch Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten und Georg Friedrich Meier* (Leipzig, 1911). Benedetto Croce, "Rileggendo L' "Aesthetica" del Baumgarten", in: *La Critica* 31 (1933), pp. 2-19. Wilhelm Dilthey, "Die drei Epochen der modernen Ästhetik und ihre heutige Aufgabe", in: *Deutsche Rundschau* 72 (1892), pp. 200-236. Robert Dixon, *The Baumgarten Corruption* (London, East Haven, CT, 1995). Hans Georg Meier, *Leibniz und Baumgarten als Begründer der deutschen Ästhetik*, Phil. Diss. (Halle, 1875). Armand Nivelle, *Les théories esthétiques en Allemagne de Baumgarten à Kant* (Paris, 1955). Hans Georg Peters, *Die Ästhetik Baumgartens und ihre Beziehung zum Ethischen* (Berlin, 1934) (Neue deutsche Forschungen. Abteilung Philosophie. I.) Bernhard Poppe, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. Seine Bedeutung und Stellung in der Leibniz-Wolffschen Philosophie und seine Beziehung zu Kant. Nebst einer bisher unbekanntenen Handschrift der Ästhetik Baumgartens* (Borna, Leipzig, 1907). Karl Heinrich von Stein, *Die Entstehung der neueren Ästhetik* (Stuttgart, 1886), pp. 336-369 [repr. (Hildesheim, 1964)]. Barck/Fontius drew attention to the fact that, before the term "aesthetica" was invented in Germany, British sensualists had already established a tradition of philosophical inquiry into perception.

⁷ Kant is well known for having rejected the notion of esthetics as a philosophical discipline. See: Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesungen über Logik. Logik Philippi* [1772], ed. by Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Kant, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 24, 1 (Berlin, 1966), p. 359. Cf.: Claire Farago, "Vision Itself Has Its History'. 'Race', Nation and Renaissance Art History", in: Farago, ed., *Reframing the Renaissance. Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America. 1450-1650* (New Haven, London, 1995), pp. 67-88. Wolfgang Wieland, "Die Erfahrung des Urteils. Warum Kant keine Ästhetik begründet hat", in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 64 (1990), pp. 604-623.

⁸ See the studies by Rohls, *Geschichte* (note 2), pp. 1-5. Schneewind, *Invention* (note 2), pp. 19-21.

⁹ See on Lipsius as an ethicist: Harald Kleinschmidt, "Justus Lipsius", in: Kleinschmidt, ed., *Why Global Uniformity?* (Tsukuba, 1996), pp. 11-96. See on ethics as a field of practical theology: Rohls, *Geschichte* (note 2), *passim*.

Professionalisation meant narrowing down the focus. Without using the word esthetics, medieval estheticists studied perception at large and established connections with ontology and with ethics. One long-term controversial issue was the ontological relationship between perception and the objects perceived. Said St Augustine: "If I were to ask first whether things are beautiful because they give pleasure, or give pleasure because they are beautiful, I have no doubt that I will be given the answer that they give pleasure because they are beautiful".¹⁰ Augustine recorded an objectivist position as the dominant view of his own time about the connection between perception and being. What constituted beauty was the quality of the objects perceived, not the activity of the perceiving person. Thus perceivers were neither obliged nor considered to be capable of passing esthetic judgments. Instead, John Scotus Eriugena argued, their only capability lay with the more or less appropriate apprehension of the quality of the perceived objects.¹¹ Nevertheless, perception was not merely a passive absorption of impression through the senses but a process considered to be convertible into action, as the beautiful and the good were inseparable manifestations of divine will and, consequently, apprehending the beautiful meant striving to act in favour of the good.¹² The objectivism inherited to the Middle Ages through the work of Augustine and others remained the dominant attitude towards perception up until the second half of the thirteenth century when, if Eco's interpretation is correct,¹³ St Thomas Aquinas introduced to philosophical theory the knowledgeable personal subjects as perceiving agents with a "cognitive power" of their own.¹⁴ At the same time, the sense organs began to receive greater attention not only as objects of scientific inquiry but also as media in the perception process intervening between the object perceived and the perceiving person.¹⁵

A similar transformation took place concerning ethics. In this regard, early medieval theologians positioned discourses on moral action in the context of the ontological

¹⁰ Augustine, *De vera religione*, cap. 32, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Series Latina, vol. 34, col. 148.

¹¹ John Scotus Eriugena, *Expositiones in ierarchiam coelestem*, cap. I/3, ed. by J. Barbet (Turnhout, 1975), p. 15 (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis. 31.) Following Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. IV/11, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Series Graeca, vol. 3, col. 770. Other editions by Philippe Chevalier, ed., Dionysius, *De divina hierarchia / de divinis nominibus*, 2 vols (Paris, 1937). John D. Jones, ed., Dionysius, *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology* (Milwaukee, 1980).

¹² John Scotus Eriugena, *Versio operum S. Dionysii*, cap. IV, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Series Latina, vol. 122, col. 1132.

¹³ Eco, *Aesthetics* (note 4), p. 119.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, secunda secundae, qu 132, ar 1, ed. by Roberto Busa, *S. Thomae Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 688.

¹⁵ See: Roger Bacon, *Perspectiva*, Distinctio III, cap. 1, ed. by David C. Lindberg, *Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 320-324.

question about the origins of the evil. The starting point of these discourses was the axiom that the divinity was the perfect good and had created the world as its own image. Following this axiom, there were two possible answers to the question. Either the evil had been divinely willed as part of the creation of the world. Then the creation of the evil in the world was to be considered as an instrument to demonstrate the goodness of the good vis-à-vis its very opposite.¹⁶ Or the evil was the product of human action. Then the evil did not exist as part of the divinely willed creation but was in the world as the denial of existence.¹⁷ Whichever position was taken, the common argumentative platform was the view that human action was per se good or evil in quality, not through human intention or conscience but through orientation or lack of orientation towards the divinely created good. It was Peter Abelard who, early in the twelfth century, introduced the notion of conscience into ethical theory. He did so by arguing that not actions themselves were either good or evil but the human intention leading to them. To Abelard conscience was the medium through which human actors could be induced to commit evil actions. Abelard demanded that persons should become conscious of their own intentions and that they should avoid committing evil actions after having recognised the evilness of their intentions. In Abelard's view, then, actions were evil if the actors were determined to pursue them consciously and with an evil intention.¹⁸

In this essay, I shall attempt to relate the postmedieval emergence of philosophical theories of esthetics (as theories of judgments about the beautiful) and ethics (as theories of judgments about the good) to changes of standards of perception and concepts of action in the course of the Middle Ages. By standards of perception I understand the set of norms, rules and customs by which persons believe and expect perception to be regulated within and across groups. The term concepts of action is meant to represent basic ideas about the motives for, the processes of and the goals of actions. I shall first describe standards of perception in the early Middle Ages, when esthetics was a means to intermediate between or juxtapose various group-specific standards of perception. I shall then examine the transformation of standards of perception during the thirteenth century whence esthetics was turned into a means to reflect philosophically on perception in

¹⁶ Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, cap. 1/4, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, vol. 16, col. 31. Augustine, *De natura boni*, cap. 4-5, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, vol. 42, col. 553-554.

¹⁷ John Scotus Eriugena, *Versio*, cap. 1V (note 12), col. 1140-1141.

¹⁸ Peter Abelard, *Liber dictus scito te ipsum*, cap. III, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, vol. 178, col. 636. New edition s. t.: *Ethical Writings. Know Yourself* (Indianapolis, 1995).

general and beauty in particular. Subsequently, I shall move on to ethics and relate early medieval ethical theory to a concept of action which was focused on process rather than on goal-attainment, and I shall trace the transformation of ethics from a means to resolve conflicts among groups with different social norms and political institutions into a theory of moral judgments in the course of the twelfth century when persons became charged with the duties to make themselves knowledgeable about their intentions and to make efforts to direct their actions towards pre-conceived and morally defensible goals. The final part of the essay shall deal with the problem of the changing patterns of interconnectedness between esthetics and ethics.

2. Perception and action in the early Middle Ages

In orally communicating groups, the various kinds of signs and signals through which communicating persons send and receive messages remain part of an integrated process of communicative action. As the communicating persons have to be present in one spot, communication involves all senses and the spoken word cannot be separated from gestures and other motions of the body.¹⁹ Perception is an aspect of the integrated process of communicative action, and, like all other norms, rules and beliefs, standards of perception in orally communicating groups must be reconstructed from sources that reflect the perceiving process or are the extant materials, which were then perceived and have continued to be so. Among the latter are pictures shedding light on the beliefs and expectations that viewers can have had at the time when the pictures were made. A frequent type of early medieval picture shows a single human figure framed by animal ornaments. These ornaments are made from animal bodies the heads of which bite or at least confront each other. This type of picture was used in book illuminations and also in plates and pendants like bracteates as well as in pieces of sculptural art. In each case, the ornamental frame of the animal bodies defined the space into which the human figure came to be placed. Such pictures display a specific kind of space, which the artists tried to visualise towards the observer. The viewers were made to perceive space as demarcat-

¹⁹ See for details: Harald Kleinschmidt, "Wordhord onleac. Bemerkungen zur Geschichte der sprechsprachlichen Kommunikation im Mittelalter", in: *Historisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft zur Pflege der Wissenschaften* 108 (1988), pp. 37-62. Kleinschmidt, "Die Bedeutung der Historischen Verhaltensforschung für die Geschichte der Unterschichten im Mittelalter. Wege zur Geschichte der sprechsprachlichen Kommunikation", in: *Mediaevalia historica Bohemica* 1 (1991), S. 317-354. Kleinschmidt, "The Fragmentation of the Integrated Process of Communicative Action. Notes on the Conceptual History of Communication in Medieval Europe", in: *NOWELE [Northwest European Language Evolution]* 35 (1999), pp. 77-114.

ing or even constraining the activities of single persons through the animal bodies. There were two ways of depicting animals as frames limiting the range of human activity: Animals could be depicted as directing their energies against each other and thereby neutralising them. Or they could be shown as attacking the human figure.²⁰ In both cases, the animals were to be perceived as potentially hostile elements of the physical environment, which could be harmful to humans when the animals did not direct their energies against each other.

It is difficult to overlook that this pictorial representation of space was closely paralleled by similar attitudes towards the physical environment during the early Middle Ages, when dense woodlands surrounded many settlements and were referred to as “deserts” where dangerous beasts and perhaps awkward persons would live.²¹ The inhabitants of settlements tried to avoid going into or passing through the woodlands except when they were in groups, in cases of emergency or when they set out to clear woodlands for new settlements. But the early medieval pictures were not merely made for the purpose of representing to the viewers a contemporary attitude towards space. Instead, their main task was to stimulate reactions from the side of the viewers. Pope Gregory I confirmed this task in his letter to Bishop Serenus of Marseille, whom he encouraged to make sure that the new and illiterate converts to Christianity were instructed properly in Christian rules or conduct through pictures.²² Thus, early medieval visual perception was conceived as a process through which the picture as the object of perception interacted with the perceiving persons or groups in such a way that the latter were induced towards predetermined actions. These actions could also identify persons as members of certain groups, such as converts to Catholicism, and could simultaneously exclude outsiders. In short, early medieval visual perception was believed and expected to translate into action.

Numerous pieces of monastic book production with their frequently observed deictic elements confirm this belief and expectation. In a few cases, they were even made explicit.

²⁰ For details see: Harald Kleinschmidt, “Perception and Action”, in: *地域研究* 29 (2001), pp. 141–173.

²¹ For details see: Harald Kleinschmidt, *Understanding the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 36–46. August Nitschke, *Körper in Bewegung* (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 148–174.

²² Pope Gregory I, *Registrum epistolarum*, nr 9, ed. by Paul Ewald, Ludo Moritz Hartmann, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae in Quart*, vol. 2 (Hanover, 1892–1899), p. 208. The strategy continued to be applied well into the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In 1025, the Synod of Arras renewed Gregory’s proposal and, about a century later, Honorius Augustodunensis defined pictures as “the literature of the lay people” (*Gemma animae*, cap. 132, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina* vol. 172, col. 586). Cf.: Eco, *Aesthetics* (note 4), p. 15.

One is extant in a Paris Gospel Book, which contains as its frontispiece a picture of Emperor Lothair I sitting on the throne.²³ In this case, the situational background was a liturgical one. The gospel book appears to have been regarded as a donation by the emperor to the monastery of St Martin in Tours (where the book was kept during the Middle Ages) in return for prayers to be said for the emperor by the monks of that monastery. In a poetic text accompanying the picture, the monastic readers of the book are reminded of their obligation to say prayers for the emperor.²⁴ The picture thus served as a reminder for the monks of St Martin in Tours that they had the duty to practice the memoria for the emperor as their previous benefactor. In this capacity, the picture could stand by itself, as it did not per se need a comment. But a poetically gifted scribe was free to make an effort to compose some explanatory lines and make verbally explicit what was already self-evident from the picture itself.

In the early Middle Ages, the intimate interrelationship between perception and action was possible and feasible within a conceptual and normative framework in which persons were regarded as receiving a significant share of their energies and physical strength from external forces, be they supernatural agents, the Christian divinity, the saints, persons of high rank and unusual powers or friends and members of the kin group. Beyond the pictures already discussed, early medieval sources abound with references to admonitions, which were awarded to others through gestures or in writing. For one, Charlemagne issued a written "general admonition" in 789 in which he claimed for himself the ruler's right to correct mistakes or prevent lack of decency and appraise what is correct.²⁵ There is further written evidence in the correspondence between St Boniface and other early medieval missionaries who were used to admonish and be admonished by their friends and colleagues.²⁶ The viability of such a mode of behaviour rested on the belief and expectation that human beings, whether alive or dead, should act for the purpose of assisting others against the irksome or evil, awe-inspiring or hostile forces emanating from the physical environment or outside groups. In other words, the belief

²³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms Fonds lat. 266, fol. Iv. Ninth century.

²⁴ The poem which accompanies the picture as been edited by Ernst Dümmler, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, vol. 2 (Hanover, 1884), p. 671, vv. 23-27. See on dedication pictures and the role of the book in medieval religious cult: Peter Ganz, ed., *Das Buch als magisches und Repräsentationsobjekt* (Wiesbaden, 1992). Wolfgang Christian Schneider, *Ruhm, Heilsgeschehen, Dialektik. Drei kognitive Ordnungen in Geschichtsschreibung und Buchmalerei der Ottonenzeit* (Hildesheim, New York, 1988).

²⁵ Charlemagne, *Admonitio generalis* [789], ed. by Alfred Boretius, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1883), nr 22, pp. 53-54.

²⁶ Michael Tangl, ed., *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, nr 9, 23, 27, 61, 64, 73-75, etc., in: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae selectae*, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1916).

and expectation that perception can spark action required the confidence on the part of the acting persons that perception was subjected to group-bound standards and predictable modes of behaviour and could therefore be translated into the means needed by persons to act for the purpose of successfully resisting or overcoming the hazards of the physical environment or other groups.²⁷ Consequently, this mode of behaviour emerged from a group-centered concept of perception in which the perceived persons or objects and the acting persons were tied together within the integrated process of communicative action and were further integrated into networks of close bonds and ties. Within these groups, be they kin groups, neighbourhood groups, contractual or political groups, the belief in the ability of certain persons and supernatural or divine agents to assist others in their struggles against the hazards coming from the physical environment or other groups was the hallmark of protection-generating power.

Early medieval perception was thus innately interconnected with action. At the level of theory, John Scotus Eriugena ranked the good together with the beautiful as the most specious of the divine names.²⁸ The supreme divine light was taken to represent the most plentiful beauty permeating everything existing in the divinely created world.²⁹ Likewise, the divinity was regarded as the sole source of the good in the world.³⁰ In the name of the divinity thus the beautiful was indistinguishable from the good. Consequently, the category of the esthetic was hard to conceptualise as an isolated phenomenon separate from action. If perception was believed and expected to be convertible into action, any theory of perception would have had to include statements related to action. Therefore, any esthetic theory would have to be an ethical theory combining, at the same time, general statements about judgments on beauty with general statements about judgments on moral action. Moreover, theoretical discourses focused only on esthetic judgments must be rested on the assumption that such judgments can be made by persons with the capability, willingness and responsibility to do so and, thereby, require the concept of persons as autonomous agents in their own right, distinct from the rights and the status obligations, which were conveyed upon persons as members of various types of groups. Instead, in the early Middle Ages, the integrated processes of communicative action tied

²⁷ See for a discussion of this mode of behaviour: August Nitschke, *Kunst und Verhalten* (Stuttgart, 1972).

²⁸ John Scotus Eriugena, *Versio* (note 12), col. 1132.

²⁹ See on ancient and medieval light theology: David Chidester, *Word and Light. Seeing, Hearing and Religious Discourse* (Urbana, Chicago, 1992). Klaus Hedwig, *Sphaera lucis. Studien zur Intelligibilität des Seienden im Kontext der mittelalterlichen Lichtspekulation* (Munster, 1980) (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters. N. F. 18.)

³⁰ Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* (note 11), cap. XI, col. 770.

persons into networks of formal action within groups and perceptions were then oriented towards the reenactment of relations among group members. Consequently, esthetic judgments remained an element of the pragmatics of actions within particularistic groups while they did not lend themselves easily to theoretical abstraction.

The abstractions that did exist in the early Middle Ages were not focused on specific parts of the perceptible world, such as pieces of art or natural objects, but were, as Curtius has already shown,³¹ concerned with the metaphysics of beauty. This metaphysics of beauty appealed to all senses equally, as John Scotus Eriugena insisted, and was to direct attention away from earthly things to imaginations through which the divinity was believed to allow human minds to participate in its own pure and invisible beauty.³²

But this does not imply that standards of perception were not controversial. By contrast, a least since the later eighth century, the Catholic Church began to make its own efforts to impose its standards first upon the clergy and, subsequently, upon the laity at large. These efforts were connected with the literal communicative standards that the Church had inherited from Antiquity and thus sparked a clash between the orality of communication in the lay groups and the literacy enshrined in the biblical tradition. The Church took the obvious position that the Bible was the universal source of norms and rules and that these norms and rules should be accepted as the standards of perception.³³ The Church made efforts to suppress the communicative standards and habits practiced in kin and other types of groups and sought to spread the belief that participation in the divine beauty through intermediation of the universal Church was a preferable over the transmission of particularistic, group-bound oral traditions. These efforts entailed resistance from among monks and nuns who were and remained connected with kin groups of high status and insisted that the group-bound traditions should continue to be accepted as sources of standards of perception.

At the end of the eighth century, the clash between particularistic and universalistic standards of perception eclipsed in an otherwise cryptic exclamation by Alcuin who was abbot of the monastery of St Martin in Tours and occupied a core role in the educational

³¹ Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Bern, 1954), p. 231, note 1 [first published (1948); 3rd ed. (1961). 11th ed. (1993); English version (London, 1953), at p. 224, note 20].

³² John Scotus Eriugena, *Expositiones*, cap. 1/3 (note 11), p. 15. Cf.: Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, cap. III, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Series Latina, vol. 32, col. 1244.

³³ Augustine, *De vera religione*, cap. 17 (note 10), col. 136-137.

and liturgical reform movements launched under Charlemagne. In a letter, addressed to an unidentified bishop in England, Alcuin criticised the use of non-Christian group-bound oral traditions in monasteries, asked: "What does Ingeld have to do with Christ?", and demanded that Ingeld should be removed from the song repertoire of the monks and nuns in England.³⁴ The phrase reflects the singing of lay songs in monasteries about a secular hero called Ingeld who was popular in English and Scandinavian legend. It personifies two opposed types of esthetic judgments, namely those based on the Bible and represented by the name of Christ, and those represented by the oral traditions about Ingeld.³⁵ Alcuin's question, what Ingeld has to do with Christ, shows that standards of perception were not the confined to vision but were related to the integrated processes of communicative action characteristic of the lay groups at the time and of which the recitals of oral traditions were a part. Alcuin's question thus confirms the tenacity of recitals of oral traditions in English monasteries or other religious communities of the time and, simultaneously, certifies the willingness of the church authorities to suppress such practices.³⁶ Instead of accepting the dualism of standards of perception, derived from Biblical sources on the one side and from lay oral traditions on the other, the Church took the view that the authority of the Bible should dominate the standards of perception and that these standards should be enforced through a ban of secular lay traditions, at least in the monasteries and lay religious communities. Thus early medieval esthetics was conceivable solely as a pragmatic means to differentiate either between various particularistic group-specific or between universalistic and particularistic standards of perception, which could be transmitted within the integrated processes of communicative action within different and often competing types of groups or the Bible.

3. The Fragmentation of the integrated process of communicative action during the high and late Middle Ages

Up until the twelfth century, the Church enforced its universalistic worldview within which visual perception obtained an ever-increasing practical significance. Around 1200, the English monastic chronicler William of Newburgh recorded a series of spectacular

³⁴ Alcuin, Ep. 124, ed. by Ernst Dillmmler, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae Karolini aevi*, vol. 2 (Hanover, 1892), p. 183.

³⁵ For a recent discussion of Alcuin's letter see: W. F. Bolton, *Alcuin and 'Beowulf'* (New Brunswick, 1979), pp. 102-103. Donald A. Bullough, "What Does Ingeld Have to Do with Lindisfarne?", in: *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993), pp. 93-125. Neither author, however, treated esthetics.

³⁶ On the general background see: Sarah Foot, "Anglo-Saxon Minsters. A Review of Terminology", in: John Blair, R. Sharpe, eds, *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 212-225. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song* (Cambridge, 1990).

events, which happened in the vicinity of the priory of St Mary at Newburgh in Yorkshire in 1196. William was worried by the frequency of reports about various vampires or similar ghosts who had been seen by a number of eyewitnesses. He wondered how reasonable and otherwise clear-minded persons could claim, apparently independent of each other and with perfect seriousness, that they had seen dead bodies rising from their graves and inflicting fatal wounds on the living before returning to their burial places. Yet William dared not doubt the reports because there were too many of them occurring at the same time and because they were recorded by otherwise trustworthy witnesses.³⁷ One of the reports was the following :

“Some years ago, the chaplain of a noble lady died, and he was buried in Melrose abbey church. The clergyman had dedicated himself to the vain passion of hunting so much that many gave him the contemptuous nickname ‘dog’s priest’. After his death, his sin was revealed. At nights, he would leave his grave, but he did not harass the monastery because of the merits of its sacred inhabitants ; so he could not molest or frighten anyone there. Instead, he wandered outside the monastery and, with much noise and terrible groaning, he terrified the immediate neighbourhood of the sleeping chamber of his former lady. After this had happened several time, the lady entrusted her fright to a monk, asking him to help her in the danger in which she lived. The monk sought advice from his subprior. Together with three trustworthy and brave clergymen, he went to the graveyard at night, where the chaplain had been buried, and stayed on guard. When half of the night had passed, the monster had not yet appeared. Then the three assistants to the monk withdrew in order to make a fire because they felt cold. Now the devil believed that his time had come, and he set life into the human body, which had remained calm longer than usually. When the monk saw the dead body, he stood like petrified. But soon regained his courage because there was no hope for escaping. He resisted the terrible groaning of the monster and struck him with a double-edged axe in his hand. Having received wounds, the monster cried, turned around and retreated, but more slowly than he had come. Puzzled, the monk pursued the monster and chased him towards his grave. The grave opened itself, grabbed its host from his pursuer and closed itself. The assistants rushed towards the grave. Next morning, they

³⁷ William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, cap. V/24, ed. by Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, vol. 2 (London, 1885), p. 477 [repr. (New York, 1965)]. See on medieval ghost stories : Hans Peter Hasenfratz, *Die toten Lebenden* (Leiden, 1982) (Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte. Beiheft 24.) Claude Lecouteux, *Les monstres dans la littérature allemande (1150 - 1350)*, 3 vols (Göppingen, 1982). Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1998) [first published (Paris, 1994)].

dug out the cursed carcass. When they had removed the earth, they saw the dead body with a big wound and found the grave filled with its blood. They carried the carcass away from the graveyard, burnt it and dispersed the ashes."³⁸

What is of interest here among the many remarkable features of the story is that the monk was made to have "seen" the chaplain-turned-monster, although, during his previous visits in the lady's sleeping chamber, the monster had been conspicuous and frightening for its noise. That means that the monastic investigation into the lady's report was conducted in such a way that the report was taken to be trustworthy under the condition that the monster was not only audible but also visible. Visibility had become an instrument of proof ranked higher than perception through the other senses. William's emphasis on vision matches neatly with his statement that he had been informed in other cases by "eyewitnesses", that is by persons who could claim to have "seen" monsters, ghosts or other evil spirits wandering about. This is remarkable because, in accounts other than those recorded through church institutions, monsters, ghosts and other evil spirits could be seen or heard or detected in a variety of different ways.³⁹ Seeing monsters, ghosts and other evil spirits rather than perceiving them in other ways thus became characteristic of late twelfth-century church-influenced reports and their later literary renderings. This implies that, by that time, vision acquired prominence over other senses among ecclesiastical authors.

Probably, the dominance from the twelfth century of visual perception in ecclesiastical reports about monsters, ghosts and other evil spirits was connected with the simultaneously increasing popularity of the *visiones* as both a literary genre and a practice of envisioning the other world.⁴⁰ For the visionaries were primarily made to have "seen" what was reported to have happened in the past or was going to happen in the future. As these reports were written out and communicated through the medium of the script, it seems appropriate to relate the emergence of vision as the most important of the senses to the fragmentation of the integrated process of communicative action which, from the twelfth century, led to an elevation of literacy as the most respected standard of communication among persons not simultaneously present at one place and exchanging messages

³⁸ *Ibid.*, cap. V/24, pp. 474-482.

³⁹ Montague Rhodes James, ed., "Twelve Medieval English Ghost Stories", in: *English Historical Review* 37 (1922), pp. 413-422. Andrew Joynes, ed., *Medieval Ghost Stories* (Woodbridge, 2001). Claude Lecouteux, *Geschichte der Gespenster und Wiedergänger im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Vienna, 1987), pp. 155-157.

⁴⁰ See: Peter Dinzelsbacher, *Visionen und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981).

beyond the boundaries of whatever types of groups.⁴¹ Evidently, literacy demands more than any other standard of communication the use of vision.

Next to the *visiones*, there are records of dreams, which describe how dreamers could “see” events which were to happen in the future. Remarkably, records of dreams with visions about the future outweighed numerically records of dreams with visions about the past in the medieval dream literature.⁴²

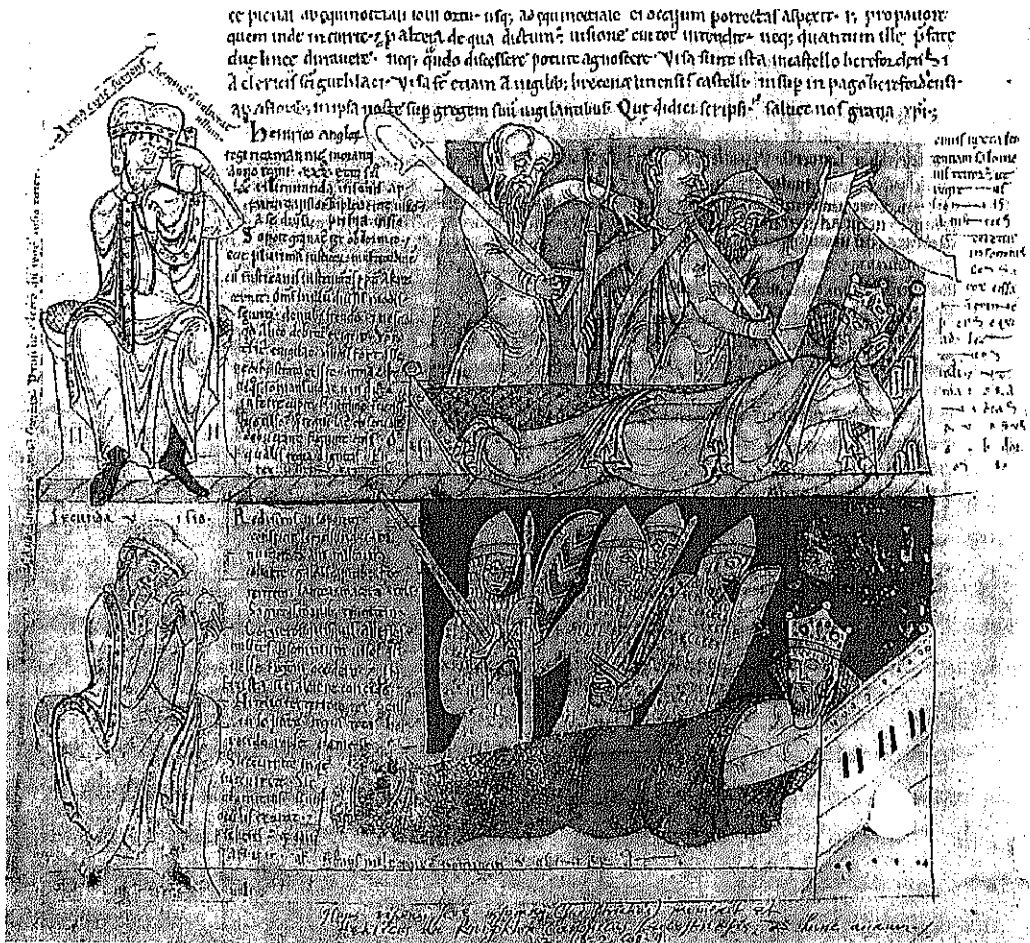


FIG 1: Dream of King Henry I of England, foreseeing a future rebellion. Ms. Oxford, Corpus Christi College 157, fol. 382v.

⁴¹ For details see : Kleinschmidt, *Understanding* (note 20), pp. 89-111.

⁴² See : Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Giorgio Stabile, eds, *Träume im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, Zurich, 1989). William Ian Miller, “Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery. Blaming the Secret Offender in Medieval Iceland”, in : *Scandinavian Studies* 58 (1986), pp. 101-123.

Likewise, twelfth-century theorists like Hugh of St Victor emphasised the importance of vision in judgments about beauty.⁴³ Moreover, the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries witnessed the reemergence of mnemotechnic strategies, which had been common already in the didactical literature of Antiquity.⁴⁴ These schemes, of which little use had been made in the early Middle Ages, were drawn on the imagery of vision. They were more explicit than their models in Antiquity in recommending the use of images as mnemotechnic devices. Students were to train themselves in associating abstract matters with images of living beings or real world objects and in recreating in their minds the divinely willed order of the world. In these exercises, vision was the most important sense as reading was the core technique of acquiring knowledge. Consequently, vision was given priority over the other senses.⁴⁵

Finally, the increased importance awarded to visual perception is confirmed by the fact that, from the thirteenth century, physicists as well as physicians took greater care than before to produce technical instruments, made from cut crystal or glass, for the improvement of the eyesight,⁴⁶ although, at the same time, no efforts were made to

⁴³ Hugh of St Victor, *Soliloquium de arrha animae*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Series Latina, vol. 176, col. 953.

⁴⁴ See, first and foremost, Hugh of St Victor, *De tribus maximis circumstantiis gestorum*, ed. by William M. Green, in: *Speculum* 18 (1943), pp. 484-493. Hugh, *Didascalion*, ed. Charles H. Buttner (Washington, DC, 1939). See for recent studies: Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 122-188. Carruthers, "Reading with Attitudes. Remembering the Book", in: Dolores Warwick Frese, Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, eds, *The Book and the Body* (Notre Dame, London, 1997), pp. 1-33. John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture. Glossing the Libro de buen amor* (Princeton, 1994) Ivan Illich, *Im Weinberg des Textes* (Frankfurt, 1991), pp. 33-54 [first published (Paris, 1990)]. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and Desire for God. A Study of Monastic Culture*, translation and second edition (New York, 1974) [first published (Paris, 1957)]. Allan B. Wolter, "Duns Scotus on Intuition, Memory and Our Knowledge of Individuals", in: Linus D. Thro, ed., *History of Philosophy in the Making. A Symposium of Essays to Honor Professor James D. Collins* (Washington, DC, 1982), pp. 81-104.

⁴⁵ Eco, *Aesthetics* (note 4), p. 62. O'Keefe, Song (note 36), pp. 8-14, has re-emphasised the importance of murmuring or loud reading for the reception of written texts throughout the early and high Middle Ages and has categorised Old English poetic manuscripts as living texts under the control of their scribes. She has thus given credit to the continuity of the significance of oral communication within groups whose members would be trained to communicate habitually through the medium of writing.

⁴⁶ See: Roger Bacon, *Opus majus*, ed. by Samuel Jebb (London, 1733), lib. 3, pars 3, distinctio 2, cap. 4, p. 352. Another ed. by John Henry Bridges, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1900), p. 157. See for studies on eyesight in the Middle Ages: Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body. Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York, 1993). Jerome Brown, "Sensation in Henry of Ghent", in: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 53 (1971), pp. 238-266. Brown, "Henry of Ghent on Internal Sensation", in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 10 (1972), pp. 15-28. Donat de Chapeaurouge, "Das Auge ist ein Herr, das Ohr ein Knecht". *Der Weg von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Malerei* (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 1-85. Eduard Jan Dijksterhuis, *Die Mechanisierung des Weltbildes* (Berlin, 1956), pp. 163-171. David C. Lindberg, "Lines of Influence in Thirteenth-Century Optics", in: *Speculum* 46 (1971), pp. 66-83. Lindberg, Nicholas H. Steneck, "The Sense of Vision and the Origins of Modern Science", in: A. G.

improve the use of other senses, such as audition. Theorists followed suit, restated the ancient Christian preference for vision over the other senses and gave to the eye special significance as the sole organ which was credited with the capability of emitting as well as absorbing light and was thus believed to be active as well as passive while the ear was taken to be a merely receptive organ.⁴⁷ In summary, from the thirteenth century, esthetics was no longer a pragmatic instrument by which conflicts among various particularistic group-bound standards of perception could be resolved. Instead, esthetics was turned into a means for the reflection on the general principles of the standards of visual perception.

Reducing esthetics to a theory of visual perception opened the door toward a systematic discussion of the existence of natural beauty and the generation of beauty through the arts. However, the option, if chosen, made it more difficult to uphold the early medieval doctrine that the beautiful and the good were indistinguishable in the name of the divinity. St Thomas Aquinas who, like his teacher Albert the Great, commented on the work of Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite arrived at conclusions which were independent both from his source and his teacher's opinions. He followed his source and his teacher in ascribing sameness of their substances to both the good and the beautiful. Yet he specified that the beautiful is a concept different from that of the good because the beautiful adds to the good an order. He insisted that the human mind needs the order

Debus, ed., *Science, Medicine and Society in the Renaissance. Essays to Honor Walter Pagel* (New York, 1972), pp. 29-45. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, London, 1976), pp. 2-9, 87-121. Lindberg, *Studies in the History of Medieval Optics* (London, 1983) (Variorum Collected Studies Series. 186.) Edward R. McCarthy, *Medieval Light Theories and Optics and Duns Scotus' Treatment of Light in D. 13 of Book II of His Commentary on the Sentences*, Ph. D. Diss. (New York: City University of New York, 1976). A. Stephen McGrade, "Seeing Things. Ockham and Representationalism", in: Christian Wenin, ed., *L'homme et son universe au Moyen Age* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1986), pp. 591-597. Edward Rosen, "Did Roger Bacon Invent Eyeglasses?", in: *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences = Archeion* N. S. (1954), pp. 3-15. A. I. Sabra, "Sensation and Inference in Alhazen's Theory of Visual Perception", in: Peter Machauer, Robert G. Turnbull, eds, *Studies in Perception. Interrelations in the History of Philosophy and Science* (Columbus, OH, 1978), pp. 160-185. Gudrun Schleusener-Eichholz, *Das Auge im Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1984). Katherine Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham. Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics. 1250 - 1345* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 216-236. Harry A. Wolfson, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophical Tracts", in: *Harvard Theological Review* 28 (1935), pp. 69-133. Gerd Zimmermann, *Ordensleben und Lebensstandard. Die cura corporis in den Ordensvorschriften des abendländischen Hochmittelalters* (Munster, 1973).

⁴⁷ See: Bacon, *Perspectiva* (note 15), pp. 326-328. John of Rodington, In libros sententiarum. Ms. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana lat. 5306, fol. 8ra, ed. by Tachau, *Vision* (note 46), p. 227. On the ancient Christian preference for vision see: Chidester, *Word* (note 29), p. 35. On Rodington see: Martin Tweedale, *John of Rodyngton on Knowledge, Science and Theology*, Ph. D. Diss. (Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles, 1965).

to acquire the cognitive power of sensing as beautiful what is beautiful by nature or art.⁴⁸ Thus, to Thomas, the beautiful had existence not per se but by virtue of passing through the good. In other words, human beings perceive something as beautiful not because it is beautiful but because they have some cognitive power that helps them to sense the beautiful as beautiful. This cognitive power develops under the condition that the beautiful adds an order to the good. In the world of human existence, then, the good as a category related to action became distinguishable from the beautiful as a category of perception, even though, within the names of the divinity, both continued to be regarded as indistinguishable. The most important sense, contributing to the formation of the cognitive power was vision, although Thomas admitted that audition could contribute to the formation of that power to a lesser extent than vision.⁴⁹

At around 1500, the dominance of visual perception over the other senses became explicit also in normative writings on ethics, such as Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* of 1528. In this work, the messages conveyed through the eyes were ranked above the messages carried by words, other signs or signals and those communicated through the other senses. Characteristically, Castiglione included his observations on aesthetics into a discourse about the ways and means by which persons were enabled to "see" and even provoke emotions such as genuine love :

*"Assuredly there is otherwise a greater affection of love perceived in a sigh, in a respect, in a feare, than in a thousand wordes. Afterwards, to make the eyes the trustie messengers, that may carrie the ambassades of the hart. Because they oftentimes declare with a more force what passion there is, than can the tongue, or letters, or messages. So that they not only disclose the thoughtes, but also manie times kindle love in the hart of the person beloved."*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Prima secundae, qu. 27, ar 1 ad 3, ed. by Busa (note 14), p. 393. Thomas, *Commentarius de divinis nominibus*, ed. by Roberto Busa, *S. Thomae Opera omnia*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1980), pp. 555-556. The views by Albert the Great on ethics are recorded in: Albertus Magnus, *De bono*, ed. by Heinrich Kühle, Karl Feckes, Bernhard Geyer, Wilhelm Kübel, *Alberti Magni Opera omnia*, vol. 23 (Munster, 1951), quaestio I-II, pp. 1-36. Albertus, *De pulchro et bono*, ed. by Roberto Busa, *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia*, vol. 7 (Stuttgart, 1980), pp. 43-47. See on Albert's ethics: Odon Lottin, "Saint Albert le Grand et l'Ethique à Nicomaque", in: *Aus der Geisteswelt des Mittelalters. Studien und Texte. Martin Grabmann zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres*, ed. by Albert Lang, Josef Lechner, Michael Schmaus (Munster, 1935), pp. 611-626 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters. Supplementbd III.1.)

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, Prima secundae, qu. 27, ar 1 ad 3, ed. by Busa (note 14), p. 393. Cf.: Witelo, *De Perspectiva*, ed. by Clemens Baeumker, *Witelo. Ein Philosoph und Naturforscher des XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Munster, 1908), pp. 143, 172-175 [repr. (Munster, 1991)].

⁵⁰ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* [(Venice, 1528)]. English version (London, 1561), pp. 246-247 [repr. (New York, 1967)].

Castiglione made it clear that visual perception informed his sensualism, which ranked vision above all other senses and took for granted that esthetic judgments could be transformed into ethical judgments. Similarly, the late sixteenth-century London professional dancer William Kemp made a conspicuous effort to advance his career through public relations and, to that end, danced all the way from London to Norwich, then the second largest town in England. In a well-publicised written report on his experiences, he displayed his pride in having attracted many bystanders who looked on while he was dancing his way.⁵¹ Vision for him was the sense most easily shaping public opinion. The sixteenth-century imagery of visual perception anticipated the sensualism propagated by John Locke towards the end of the seventeenth century.⁵² To late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century sensualists it was still self-evident that vision was the first and foremost of the senses, when they defined esthetics as the philosophical discipline whose practitioners were given the tasks of reflecting on judgments of beauty and providing a theory of expressions of sensual knowledge.⁵³ Specifically, such moralists as the Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson insisted that, although being credited with an autonomy of perception, every person would have to accept that esthetic judgments as judgments of beauty were based on "common sense". By this was meant the normative principle from which the criteria were derived according to which persons would make their own esthetic judgments.⁵⁴ Under these assumptions, the belief continued that esthetic judgments could be converted into ethical judgments.

⁵¹ William Kemp, *Kempes Nine Daies VVonder. Performed in a Daunce from London to Norwich* (London, 1600).

⁵² John Locke, *Works*, vol. 1 (London, 1823), p. 136 [repr. (Aalen, 1963)].

⁵³ See: Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (Frankfurt, 1981) Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*, vol. 1: Education of the Senses (Oxford, 1984. Dietmar Kamper, Christoph Wulf, eds, *Das Schwinden der Sinne* (Frankfurt, 1984). John MacManmon, "Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry* and the Controversy over the Basis of Morality. 1700 - 1750", in: *Eighteenth-Century Life* 5 (1979), pp. 1-13. Holger A. Pausch, "Dialektik des Sehens. Beobachtungen zur Genealogie des Gesichts in der Literatur", in: Gerd Labrousse, Dirk van Stekelenburg, eds, *Das Sprach-Bild als textuelle Interaktion* (Amsterdam, Atlanta, 1999), pp. 15-44. Theodore K. Rabb, "Resolution in Aesthetics", in: Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1975), pp. 100-115. Ronald W. Tobin, "Esthétique et société au dix-septième siècle", in: *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature* 6 (1976/77), pp. 8-10. Horst Wenzel, "Partizipation und Mimesis. Die Lesbarkeit der Körper am Hof und in der höfischen Literatur", in: Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, eds, *Materialität der Kommunikation* (Frankfurt, 1988), pp. 178-202.

⁵⁴ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Sensus communis* [1723], ed. in: Shaftesbury, *Standard Edition*, vol. 1,1 (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 40-44, 48, 74-76. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty* (London, 1725), pp. 4-11 [repr., ed. by Bernhard Fabian (Hildesheim, New York, 1971)]. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, 2 vols (Frankfurt, 1750-1758), vol. 1, pars I, cap. I, paragr. 17 [repr. (Hildesheim, 1961); 3rd ed. of the repr. (Hildesheim, New York, 1986)]. Baumgarten, *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, ed. by Hans Rudolf Schweizer (Hamburg, 1983), p. 81.

4. Resolving conflicts among competing sets of moral and legal norms

As in the case of esthetics, the ethical was difficult to conceptualise as a category of its own during the Middle Ages. As long as it was assumed that the activities of persons were focused on and influenced by the various types of groups to which they might belong, it was hard to establish a general theory of moral behaviour overarching the particularistic principles transmitted within the groups. Under these conditions, ethics was predominantly a pragmatic instrument for the resolution of conflicts among competing sets of moral and legal norms, as much as esthetics was then a means for the resolution of conflicts among opposing standards of perception. In the case of ethics, such conflicts could arise if persons were placed into situations in which their membership in various types of groups entailed mutually exclusive rights and obligations.

In the late sixth century, St Gregory, Bishop of Tours recorded one case in which rights following from membership in certain types of groups militated against rights derived from other sources. The city was then under the rule of the Frankish kings. Gregory described an episode in which a certain Andarchius was involved. He was about to marry a woman whose name has remained unknown. The woman's mother accepted him as the bridegroom by whereas her father Ursus hesitated to agree. Andarchius did not want to give up marrying the woman and, in order to succeed, he conceived of the following strategy: He deposited an armour into a chest and brought the chest to his fiancée's home. Meeting the mother there, he explained to her that he had put 16.000 gold coins into the chest as his pledge of faithfulness. The mother accepted the chest without opening it. Then Andarchius looked out for someone in town whose name was also Ursus and, after he had found such a person, bribed him to sign a written document. In the written document, the second Ursus agreed that he would return 16.000 gold coins to Andarchius in the case that Ursus should refuse to consent to the marriage of his daughter with Andarchius. The second Ursus found no problem signing this document for Andarchius had never pledged to marry the second Ursus's daughter nor had the second Ursus received 16.000 gold coins from Andarchius. Andarchius then took the document to court and sued the first Ursus on either agreeing to the marriage or returning the 16.000 gold coins. But the first Ursus did neither. The court ruled that, because the first Ursus was unwilling to repay the 16.000 gold coins, he had to forfeit his property to Andarchius. Soon after Andarchius had moved into the first Ursus's house, a fire destroyed the building, put Andarchius to death and allowed the first Ursus to retrieve what was left.

of his property.⁵⁵

As Gregory tells it, the episode is the story of a crime committed with the employment of a written document under the explicit goal of deception. Among others, the story displays two interesting features. The first is that, in the post-Roman, sixth-century city of Tours,⁵⁶ the declining population could no longer, as under Roman rule, avail itself of institutions for the purpose of authenticating or testing written documents. Had such institutions been in existence at Gregory's time, the unlucky Ursus would not have been victimised by the fraud, and the tricky Andarchius would have had to conceive a different technique if he wanted to cheat. Moreover, institutional constraints would have been able to prevent the execution of the fraud, for the first Ursus could have been in a position to prove that he had not signed the document. Still, however, written documents carried with them the weight of legal validity, against which oral protestations were evidently worthless. Hence the first Ursus escaped complete disaster only because, as Gregory put it, the omniscient divinity had Andarchius destroyed by fire. The second feature concerns the names of the protagonists. They are of Roman origin and thus indicate that their bearers were Romanes living in the city under Frankish rule. As is known from contemporary legal sources, the Romanes as inhabitants of the Frankish kingdom lived under a kinship rule according to which the kin group did not exercise any rights or privileges over the members of individual households as the descendants of a married couple or other of their dependents.⁵⁷ This rule implied that among Romanes, the kin group as such had no principal legal titles in landed property but that these rights rested with individuals or the heads of households. Hence, the absence of group-based rights in landed property was the final factor, which made the Andarchius/Ursus episode possible. Andarchius's strategy could only have been successful under the condition that Andarchius addressed his faked charges to the first Ursus alone. Had Ursus's extended kin group had any rights in the estate on which Ursus was living, Ursus would not have been forced to forfeit it to Andarchius. Instead, members of Ursus's kin group would have stepped in as defenders of their rights. Therefore, the Andarchius/Ursus episode

⁵⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X*, cap. IV/46, ed. by Bruno Krusch, Wilhelm Levison, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, vol. I (Hanover, 1951), pp. 180-183.

⁵⁶ See on Tours: Nancy Gautier, Jean-Christien Picard, eds, *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1987). Luce Pieri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle* (Paris, Turin, 1983).

⁵⁷ See: Heinrich Brunner, "Sippe und Wergeld nach niederdeutschen Rechten", in: Brunner, *Abhandlungen zur Rechtsgeschichte*, ed. by Karl Rauch, vol. I (Weimar, 1931), pp. 104-208 [repr. (Leipzig, 1965).]

was possible solely under the conventions of Roman kinship law, while the institutions enforcing that law had vanished or been replaced by other institutions under Frankish rule. That this argument is not entirely speculative emerges from a rule preserved in the eighth-century *Lex Alamannorum* according to which witnesses to a donation of landed property to a church had to testify in the case that the children of the donor should challenge the authenticity of the transaction. The rule makes it clear that, at the time, kin members of non-Roman groups frequently intervened in transactions of landed property through chartered privileges on the grounds that such transactions were alienations of kin group property and involved the consent of the kin group.⁵⁸ By contrast, the Andarchius/Ursus episode arose in a social setting where the Roman traditional normative framework of ethics was no longer compatible with the institutional framework guaranteed by the Frankish rulers. The lack of compatibility between both frameworks opened venues for fraud and other kinds of abuse.

The ninth-century Old High German known as *Hildebrandslied* shows a conflict between opposing obligations resulting from membership in different types of groups.⁵⁹ The poem describes an episode where the protagonists are made to choose between obligations to their kin groups and obligations to the contractual groups of military retainers of which they happened to be the leaders. The protagonists opted for the latter obligations, but their option ended in a tragic situation because both leaders discovered that they were father and son. The two protagonists discovered their kin relationship by introducing themselves with their names. The father had left his kin group, perhaps not entirely voluntarily, many years before and had no direct memory of his son's name. But he was knowledgeable in the standard name-giving practice according to which the kin membership of persons was likely to be determined through characteristic particles of the usually dithematic names. The names thus served as identifiers of kinship and linked persons with the traditions of norms and rules transmitted with their kin groups. Therefore, recognition of kin membership was identical with the abidance by the group-specific norms and rules. In the case of the *Hildebrandslied*, however, both protagonists agreed to act against the norms of their kin group because, as leaders of two opposing warrior bands, they were obliged to fight each other. The ethical conflict thus resulted from the mutually exclusive demand to support kin members on the one side and, on the other, to act in accordance with the pledges or contracts on which the social cohesion of

⁵⁸ *Lex Alamannorum*, cap. 11/1, ed. by Karl August Eckhardt, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges nationum Germanicarum*, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1966), pp. 66-67.

⁵⁹ Hartmut Brozinski, ed., *Das Hildebrandslied*, vv. 7-19, 2nd ed. (Kassel, 1985), no pagination.

the warrior bands rested. The two protagonists could agree to act against their kin obligations because the sanctions they faced had they decided to abandon their warrior bands would have been more severe. For the kin groups could, in the worst case, expel their members, whereas the warriors could desert their leaders or even kill them. In both groups, the moral norms and rules were part of the traditions or contracts that constituted the particularistic groups in which the protagonists were members. In the case of the mutually exclusive obligations that could result from membership in these types of group, ethics did not come along as a general theory of moral duties but served only as an instrument to determine the priorities among group loyalties. Conflicts could also arise when persons failed to abide by the moral norms stipulated by a ruler on the grounds that the norms were wholly or partly incompatible with the legal and moral norms of their own groups. In these cases, which were usually subsumed under the notion of the feud, resistance against a ruler's law could entail punishment in the form of the revenge to the end of restoring the ruler's position of command.⁶⁰ Lastly, conflicts could erupt within or among groups among which disagreement persisted over the validity of mutually incompatible sets of norms and rules. In these cases, arbitration was an often chosen means of conflict resolution⁶¹ but the conflicts could also escalate into warfare. A case is described in the early eleventh-century Old English poem *The Battle of Maldon*. Here, a warrior band of apparently Scandinavian origin travelled to eastern England by ship across the North Sea and was challenged upon arrival in 991 by an armed force made up from local farmers who seem to have been obliged to rally behind a local aristocrat in defense of their lands. They lost the struggle against the invaders mainly because some of the defenders regarded their position as hopeless and deserted the army. In this case, the ethics of the invading warrior band was one according to which victory in battle was decisive for their future fate, and they were prepared to operate at full risk. By contrast, the ethics of the defense force was one according to which local farmers would primarily

⁶⁰ See: Heinz Holzhauer, "Zum Strafgedanken im frühen Mittelalter", in: Stephan Buchholz, Paul Mikat, Dieter Werkmüller, eds, *Überlieferung, Bewahrung und Gestaltung in der rechtsgeschichtlichen Forschung* (Paderborn, 1993), pp. 179-192. Alexander Patschowsky, "Fehde im Recht", in: Christine Roll, Bettina Braun, Heide Stratenwerth, eds, *Reich und Recht im Zeitalter der Reformation. Festschrift für Horst Rabe* (Frankfurt, 1996), p. 174. Jürgen Weitzel, "Strafe und Strafverfahren in der Merowingerzeit", in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung* 111 (1994), pp. 94-95, 137-138.

⁶¹ A tenth-century case is recorded in the context of the struggles within the kin group of Emperor Otto I between the emperor and his son Liudolf. See: Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, cap. 18, ed. by Irene Ott, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, vol. 10 (Weimar, 1951), pp. 16-17. See on arbitration: Gerd Althoff, "Schranken der Gewalt. Wie gewalttätig war das 'finstere Mittelalter'?", in: Horst Brunner, ed., *Der Krieg im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1999), pp. 1-23.

seek to preserve their lives and victory in battle was a secondary value.⁶² In absence of an overarching framework of norms and rules from which the criteria for the condemnation of the invaders as aggressors and the justice and reward for the defenders resisting the invaders could have been derived, warfare was the only solution to the conflict. In summary, the only commonly accepted principle of ethics at this time consisted in the agreement that the differences among group-bound legal and moral norms should be mutually respected as much as possible.

Such relativism militated against the universalistic fundamentals of the Christian Church. In the Occident, the Catholic Church gradually intensified its request that believers should act exclusively in accordance with those moral norms that could be derived from prescriptions contained in the Bible and other important texts under the control of the church authorities. Among the moral norms stipulated by the Bible, the Ten Commands featured most prominently as they had to be regarded as a divine revelation. The problem for ecclesio-gene ethical theory was thus not the universal validity of the Ten Commands as this was taken for granted. Instead, the disputes among Christian ethicists were about answers to the question whether or not human beings ought to be credited with a free will to act morally or immorally. The answers oscillated between the fundamentalist position, which St Augustine took in his later writings, and the pragmatic view that was inherited to the Middle Ages from interpretations of the work of Pelagius and his followers. The position Augustine came to adopt was that, in consequence of the Fall, human beings had no choice other than to sin and that their redemption was possible only through divine grace. Augustine thus postulated that human beings had inherited the "eternal sin" from their biblical ancestors and were henceforth bound to lead sinful lives.⁶³ On the other side, the tradition of ethical thought inaugurated through the writings of Pelagius in the fourth century, whom Augustine unsuccessfully tried to condemn, received much attention in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Pelagius had argued that actions could only be sinful if human actors had

⁶² *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by D. G. Scragg (Manchester, 1981). Cf. for an interpretation of this source: Harald Kleinschmidt, "Das Problem des Geschichtlichen in der *Battle of Maldon*", in: *Poetica* 19 (Tokyo 1978), pp. 12-34.

⁶³ Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*, cap. IV/ 3, 30-31, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, vol. 44, col. 754. Augustine, *De natura boni*, cap. 9, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, vol. 42, col. 554. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, cap. XIII/14, XIV/13, ed. by Bernard Dombart, Alphons Kalb (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 395-396, 434-436 (*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. 48,2.) In his earlier work, Augustine had taken the more moderate position that immoral actions are punishable, with the implication that human beings can have a choice not to act immorally. See: Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* (note 32), cap. I/3, col. 1224-1225.

the choice not to sin, and had thus demanded recognition of the free human will to commit evil actions. He had insisted that sin could not follow from a divine command because, if this were so, it would itself be part of the divinely created world and, consequently, no longer a sin.⁶⁴ Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite elaborated on this position from his objectivism through which all good was in the divinity. From this point of view, the evil did not have existence as part of the divinely created world and could thus only have been conditioned by human will. Therefore, Dionysius concluded that human beings ought to be credited with the capability to opt for either the good or the evil.⁶⁵ John Scotus Eriugena followed suit adding that Judgment Day could only be fair if human beings had a real choice to sin or not to sin.⁶⁶ Moreover, Scotus went beyond Dionysius in deriving from his ontology of good and evil a theory of action. He defined the good as the divinely willed beginning and end and argued that the evil could only result from some accident. The accident was associated with the misperception through which what is actually not good appears to be good to the human mind.⁶⁷ Contrary to the teleological ethics enshrined in Aristotle's work, Scotus's ethical theory supported the conceptualisation of action as process-related rather than goal-oriented. This concept of action was perfectly in line with early medieval patterns of action, which can be reconstructed best from tracts on the most preferable modes of agricultural production. In these texts,⁶⁸ generally accepted patterns of action appeared as recommendable when they ranked the appropriateness of the process of production as the most important means to accomplish the goal of harvesting the crop. Thus, whereas the goal was taken as a given the focus of practical action was on its process and the choice of the best techniques of steering the process towards its predetermined end. The Andarchius/Ursus and the Battle of Maldon episode present cases, which deviated from this pattern. But in the Andarchius/Ursus episode, the social setting was a town and the action was brandmarked as criminal. And in *the Battle of Maldon*, the conflict resulted from the contingent appearance of an offensive warrior band in a social setting that appears to have been characterised by a lack of war-proneness and orientation towards agricultural production.

⁶⁴ Pelagius, *Epistola ad Demetrium*, cap. 3, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, vol. 30, col. 17-18. See on Pelagius's writings: Georges de Plinval, *Pelagius. Ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne, 1943).

⁶⁵ Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* (note 11), cap. IV/11, col. 770-771.

⁶⁶ John Scotus Eriugena, *Versio* (note 12), cap. IV, col. 1140-1141.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 1145.

⁶⁸ See, for one: *Gerefa*, ed. by Felix Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1 (Halle, 1903), pp. 453-455.

5. *The emerging uniformity of ethics*

By the eleventh century, an unprecedented degree of uniformity had been reached in occidental Christendom, which, for the time being, existed without any institutionalised confessional rifts or fundamental controversies over doctrine. When, from the twelfth century, groups of dissidents or groups with liturgical practices that deviated from the church norm reappeared,⁶⁹ the Church took rigorous measures for the purpose of disciplining these groups and, if necessary, excommunicating them.⁷⁰ Hence, the uniformity of the church-stipulated ethics did not imply agreements about all moral norms, but it did provide the criteria by means of which dissidents could be criminalised as outcasts and deviant practices could be suppressed.

The rigidity in the pursuit of the uniformity of moral judgments was possible only under the condition that, before the divinity and *sub specie aeternitatis*, all human-made moral norms were equal, so that humankind could be seen as in possession of certain rights and obligations which were derived from the divinely ordained “natural law”. Consequently, if the uniformity of the fundamentals of ethics became focused on what the divinity was believed to have ordained as unalterable natural law, infringements against these fundamentals of ethics were acts of opposition against the divine will, hence, they were acts of resistance against divine omnipotence and, thereby, a menace to humankind. In explicit opposition against St Isidore of Seville who,⁷¹ he said, had wrongly equated natural law with the laws commonly accepted by all population groups in the world,⁷² St Thomas Aquinas constituted natural law monistically as the single metaphysical principal command that humans should direct their actions towards the divinely willed good. Thus far, Thomas was in line with the Dionysian tradition of identifying natural law with the good and as the predetermined general goal of all human action. But, contrary to this tradition, Thomas did no longer deny existence to the evil. Instead, he understood the divinely willed principal command enshrined in natural law as the

⁶⁹ See, for example: Johann Jakob Herzog, *Die romanischen Waldenser, ihre vorreformatorischen Zustände und Leben, ihre Reformation im 16. Jahrhundert und die Rückwirkungen derselben* (Halle, 1853).

⁷⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Prima secundae, qu. 101, ar 3, ed. by Busa (note 14), p. 492.

⁷¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, cap. V/4, ed. by W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), no pagination. However, Isidore did actually add that natural law owed its existence to some natural instinct and not to statutes resulting from human activity.

⁷² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Prima secundae, qu 94, ar 4, ad 3, ed. by Busa (note 14), p. 479.

obligation for human beings to make conscious decisions to act in favour of the good and against the evil. He thus followed Abelard in admitting the human capability to determine what is good and what is evil. He even refined Abelard's decisionism into the postulate that morally acting human beings act reasonably. The introduction of practical reason into ethical theory allowed Thomas to distinguish between two types of goals of action. One was the metaphysical goal associated with natural law, namely the accomplishment of the good. The other was the choice of goals, which human beings might take through various kinds of reasoning or simply choosing to act unreasonably. Thus the natural inclination towards the good could be upset or even overturned by human actors choosing to act unreasonably or to sin, that is, to direct their actions to evil ends. In his explication of goal-oriented actions as a core aspect of his ethical theory, Thomas explicitly referred to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as his major source. Acting against the stipulations of reason or acting unreasonably was thus seen as resulting from a decision to act against the good and, consequently, in defiance of natural law.⁷³ Hence, natural law represented a metaphysical category which, unlike the ethics of the early Middle Ages, was no longer employed as a pragmatic instrument for the resolution or smoothing away of conflicts among incompatible sets of group-bound moral norms, but, instead, was used for the purpose of legitimising punishments for infringements against it. Therefore, from the twelfth century, ethics changed from a pragmatic device for conflict resolution into a theory about the generalisability of moral judgments.

6. Conclusion : *Esthetics and ethics*

Esthetics has been defined in this essay in its wider original non-technical sense of the reflection about standards of perception. The wider definition of esthetics has allowed the description of changes of standards of perception and of the impact of these changes on the narrowing down of the meaning of esthetics to the reflection on judgments about beauty, most frequently positioned in the context of the theory of the arts. Likewise, ethics has been defined in this essay in its wider non-technical sense of the reflection about the concepts of action. Again, the wider definition of ethics has allowed the description of changes of concepts of action and the impact of these changes on the

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 479-480. Cf.: Josef Lechner, "Johann von Rodington, OFM, und sein Quodlibet de conscientia", in: Albert Lang, Josef Lechner, Michael Schmaus, eds, *Aus der Geisteswelt des Mittelalters. Studien und Texte. Martin Grabmann zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres* (Munster, 1935), pp. 1125-1168 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters. Supplementbd III/2.) (at p. 1149, Lechner prints a passage from the Bruges City Library Ms of the Quodlibet, fol. 14b, relating to the human free will). On Rodington cf. note 47. On Abelard cf. note 18.

narrowing down of the definition of ethics to the reflection on judgments about the morality of action, most frequently positioned in the contexts of practical philosophy and practical theology.

The most significant and consequential changes took place between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries and entailed a reconceptualisation of the relationship between perception and action. In the early Middle Ages, it had been believed and expected that perception was and should be directly transformable into action so that persons perceiving certain kinds of objects, such as pictures, could be expected to act in a predetermined way. Perception was equated with the apprehension of the qualities of the objects and persons perceived and action was recognised as the choice of the appropriate process towards the accomplishment of predetermined goals. The beautiful and the good were essentially regarded as metaphysical categories, becoming indistinguishable in the name of the divinity. It was therefore consistent for persons to expect that esthetic judgments were convertible into ethical judgments and vice versa. This was possible for persons who were used to be engaged in oral integrated processes of communicative action with other group members and remained closely integrated in various types of groups among which kin, neighbourhood and contractual groups featured most prominently as particularistic tradition-transmitting, norm-setting and rule-enforcing institutions. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, the objectivist approaches to esthetics and ethics were subjected to the uniform control of the Christian churches as universal institutions and, consequently, the degree of control was reduced which groups could execute over their members. The group-specific oral integrated processes of communicative action gave way to literacy as a universal standard of communication, and individual group members became more prone to make use of their own personal physical and intellectual capabilities. These new trends were reflected, first, in the new ethical theory of action, which was proposed early in the twelfth century and articulated the demand that persons should be credited with the capability of making judgments about good or evil actions on the basis of their own conscience. Such decision-making capability helped recasting the focus of action from process to goal-attainment because the capability of deciding about committing oneself to a good or evil action presupposed the setting of a goal to be accomplished through the action. In other words, persons could be expected to be able to make their own decisions whether to act morally or immorally if they considered not merely the processes of their actions but also their goals. Esthetics followed suit to ethics with a lag of about one hundred years. In this respect, theorists began to demand recognition of the capability of persons to develop their own cognitive

power helping them to recognise the beautiful. In consequence, perception was no longer equal of the apprehension of the qualities of perceived objects and persons but was regarded to comprise an intellectual activity by which the perceiving persons were expected to make their own judgments. As simultaneously the fragmentation of the integrated processes of communicative action helped advance the role and significance of vision beyond those of the other senses, esthetics became a theory most concerned with judgments about beauty, mainly though not exclusively through the use of the eyes.

The conceptual histories of esthetics and ethics have thus revealed a degree of overlap which, up to the high Middle Ages supported the belief that esthetic judgments could be transformed into moral judgments and vice versa. However, the introduction of conscience and the cognitive power of persons into ethical and esthetic theory during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries began to widen the gap between esthetics and ethics. If persons using their individual conscience could err, as Abelard admitted, or if the cognitive power could be handled more or less appropriately, as St Thomas Aquinas believed, the justice of deriving esthetic judgments from ethical ones and vice versa could be called into question. That this did not happen immediately during the Middle Ages was solely due to the conviction still shared by estheticians as well as ethicists that the good and the beautiful were indistinguishable in the name of the divinity. This was not merely speculative philosophy. Instead, by the fourteenth century, matters of ethical significance, among them membership in social groups such as the aristocracy,⁷⁴ incorporation into contractual groups such as artisans' guilds and merchant trading companies,⁷⁵ integration into urban communities of towns and cities⁷⁶ as well as subjection to territorial legislation of the peasant farming population,⁷⁷ were considered to be ascribable on the basis of features which could be perceived and judged from the outside through esthetic judgments and were thus not taken to require declaratory acts. Such confidence in the purportedly objective recognisability of appropriate moral conduct through the senses informed not only the setting of principles of moral conduct but also the many sumptuary laws and other dress codes which were characteristic of the fourteenth,

⁷⁴ For sources see: Ulrich of Lichtenstein, *Frauendienst*, vv. 25,5, ed. by Reinhold Bechstein (Leipzig 1888). Ulrich von Hutten, [Letter to Willibald Pirckheimer, 25.10.1518], ed. by Eduard Böcking, Hutten, *Schriften*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1859), pp. 201-203.

⁷⁵ For a widely differentiated description of the hallmarks of these groups see: *Des Teufels Netz. Satirisch-didaktisches Gedicht der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1863).

⁷⁶ For a review of the sources see: Harald Kleinschmidt, "ヨーロッパ中世の社会論とブルワシ", in: *西洋史論争* [早稲田大学] 19 (1997), pp. 27-39.

⁷⁷ Stereotype and largely contemptuous descriptions of peasant behaviour can be found in the songs by Neithard of Reuenthal, *Lieder*, ed. by Segfried Beyschlag (Darmstadt, 1975).

fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷⁸

In turn, from the sixteenth century, the emphasis of perception as one condition of action promoted the formulation of explicit rules by which the imperceptible morality of a person could be made perceptible according to the physiognomy of the face and other parts of the body, bodily bearing as well as the use of gestures and movements and persons' success in controlling the "bad odours" emanating from their bodies.⁷⁹ The

⁷⁸ See for sources: Ferdinando Bertelli, ed., *Omnium fere gentium nostrae aetatis habitus nunquam ante hac aetatis* (Venice, 1653). Hans Weigel, ed., *Habitus praecipuorum populo- rum tam virorum quam foeminarum singularis arte depicti. Trachtenbuch. Darin fast allerley vnd der furnehmsten Nationen / die heutigen tags bekandt sein / Kleidungen / beyde wie es bey Manns vnd Weibspersonen gebreuchlich / mit allem vleiss abgerissen sein* (Nuremberg, 1577). Cesare Vecellio, *De gli habiti antichi et moderni di diversi arti del mondo* (Venice, 1590). [repr. (Bologna, 1982)]. Jean de Glen, ed., *Des habits, moeurs, façons de faire anciennes & modernes du monde* (Liège, 1601). Abraham a Sancta Clara, *Neu-eröfnete Welt-Galleria worinnen sehr curios und begnügt unter die Augen kommen allerley Aufzug und Kleidungen unterschiedlicher Stände und Nationen* (Nuremberg, 1703). See on dress codes: Neithard Bulst, Robert Jütte, eds., "Zwischen Sein und Schein. Kleidung und Identität in der ständischen Gesellschaft", in: *Saeculum* 44 (1993), pp. 2-112. Martin Dinges, "Der 'feine Unterschied'. Die soziale Funktion der Kleidung in der höfischen Gesellschaft", in: *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 19 (1992), pp. 49-76. Lieselotte Constanze Eisenbart, *Kleiderordnungen der deutsche Städte zwischen 1350 und 1700* (Göttingen, 1962). Jürgen Ellermeyer, "Sozialgruppen, Selbstverständnis, Vermögen und städtische Verordnungen", in: *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 113 (1977), pp. 243-275. Gabriele Randzus, *Die Zeichensprache der Kleidung. Untersuchungen zur Symbolik des Gewandes in der deutschen Epik des Mittelalters* (Hildesheim, New York, 1985). Daniel Roche, *La culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement. XVIIe - XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1989).

⁷⁹ See for the interpretation of physiognomy: Johannes Althusius, *De conversatione libri duo* (Hanover, 1601). Henry Fielding, "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Character of Men [1753]", in: Fielding, *Miscellaneous Writings in Three Volumes*, vol. 1 (London, 1967), pp. 279-305 (Fielding, *The Works*. 14.) Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, 6 vols (Winterthur, 1775-1779). James Parsons, "Human Physiognomy Explain'd in the Crounian Lectures on Muscular Motion for the Year 1746", in: *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 44,1 (1746), supplement. Giovanni Battista della Porta, *De humana physiognomonica* (Aequi Vecensis, 1585). Christian Thomasius, "Neue Erfindung einer wohl gegründeten und für das gemeine Wesen höchst nöthigen Wissenschaft das Verborgene des Hertzens anderer Menschen auch gegen deren Willen aus der täglichen Conversation zu erkennen", in: Thomasius, *Kleine teutsche Schriften* (Halle, 1701), pp. 449-490. Christian Wolff, *Philosophia rationalis sive logica* (Frankfurt, Leipzig, 1732), pp. 641-706 [repr., ed. by Jean Ecole (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York, 1983) (Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke*. II/1.3.)] Wolff, *Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes* (Halle, 1754), pp. 219-231 [repr., ed. by Hans Werner Arndt (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York, 1978) (Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke*. I/1.)] Critical: Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, "Über Physiognomik. Wider die Physiognomen. Zu Beförderung der Menschenliebe und Menschenkenntnis [1778]", in: Lichtenberg, *Schriften und Briefe*, vol. 3, ed. by Wolfgang Promies (Munich, 1972), pp. 256-295. See on rules for judgments on bodily bearing: Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der Privat-Personen* (Berlin, 1728) [repr., ed. by Gotthardt Frühsorge (Weinheim, 1990)]. See on rules for judgments of gestures and movements: Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (London, 1699). See on rules for controlling odours: Joseph B. Priestley, *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air*. [Lecture

result was a conventionalism which permeated all aspects of behaviour, stimulated the belief in the stability of essential conditions of life and promoted the willingness to adhere to the conventional moral codes as a measure of personal success. Stability was appraised as a high value in its own right and was taken to be the single most important condition of happiness. It was Kant himself, however, who disclosed the vanity of the belief that esthetic judgments can support moral judgments. What Kant admitted in philosophical terms was only a reflection of the storm that gathered at the end of the eighteenth century, blew away all these neatly composed rules by which esthetic judgments had continued to be expected to be subjectable to abstract reasoning and, instead following the lead taken by Justus Lipsius two hundred years before, admitted no more than the metaphysical construct of humankind as the ultimate source of morality.⁸⁰ Needless to say that the subjectivation of esthetics has betrayed the vanity of the belief that moral judgments can or ought to be based on esthetic judgments. The twentieth-century skepticism against the possibility of objective esthetic judgments was obviously justified by the legacy of collective crimes against humanity committed during that century. But the skepticism owes its existence in Europe to the separation of esthetics from ethics in the Middle Ages.

delivered to the Royal Society on 28 June 1750] (London, 1774-1777). See on Rohr: Karl-Heinz Göttert, "Rhetorik und Konversationstheorie", in: Joachim Dyck, Walter Jens, Gert Ueding, eds, *Rhetorik der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1991), p. 55. See on Shaftesbury: Wolfgang H. Schrader, *Ethik und Anthropologie in der englischen Aufklärung. Der Wandel der Moral-Sense-Theorie von Shaftesbury bis Hume* (Hamburg, 1984), pp. 1-37.

⁸⁰ Carl Theodor von Dalberg, *Von Erhaltung der Staatsverfassungen* (Erfurt, 1795), pp. 6-7, 11. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* [Berlin, 1790], newly ed. in: *Kant, Werke in zwölf Bänden*, ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel, vol. 10 (Frankfurt, 1968), p. 517. For the subjectivation of esthetics see: Kant, *ibid.*, pp. 279-328. On humankind as a metaphysical construct see: Johann Gottfried Herder, *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, in: Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. by Bernhard Suphan, vol. 17 (Berlin, 1881), p. 17.