Gaia Gubbini

Introduction

‘Body and spirit in the Middle Ages’¹: why wonder about this subject today? For two reasons, I would say. Two (apparently) antithetical reasons – or, rather, complementary ones.

The first reason arises from a contemporary perspective: it is a theme deeply rooted in the condition of being human, and today – maybe more than ever – the importance of the ‘psychosomatic’ dimension seems evident to medicine, to psychoanalysis and, more broadly, to contemporary culture. The Middle Ages, in their complexity and richness, can thus provide us (paradoxically enough) with ‘new’ perspectives – even on some of the questions at the centre of contemporary debates. Moreover, the problem being, as mentioned, deeply rooted in the human condition, it is a theme that is at the very heart of *studia humanitatis* and that, especially in the present-day context of continuous, short-sighted questioning of the legitimacy and usefulness of the study of the humanities, can constitute by itself a good answer: in a nutshell, what are the *studia humanitatis* if not a better understanding of the historical ‘strata’ and the cultural dynamics that have characterised humankind and its representation of itself and of its world over the course of time? The ‘body and spirit’ question is a crucial element of such a puzzle.

Which brings us to the second reason, which could be characterised as ‘nostalgic’: the Middle Ages and their world – where the encounter/clash between body and spirit played a central role – are forever lost, despite all our efforts. Each passage from one text to another, each historical upheaval, brings changes over the centuries, which can make researchers aware of the distance that separates them from the object of analysis. Trying to patiently ‘reconstruct’ – although always in a highly hypothetical way – the tesserae of the mosaic can give us a much more well-defined picture. And every tessera counts.

‘Body and spirit in the Middle Ages: literature, philosophy, medicine’: why is this complex best explored with an interdisciplinary approach? The reason for this is that the theme itself renders it necessary, due to the richness of perspectives

¹ In the complex question of the possible distinction and/or overlap between the terms ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’, I have chosen for the title the word ‘spirit’ because it is closer to the Latin term *spiritus* – and, therefore, also allows for the inclusion of all the references to the different spirits of the pneumatic doctrine.

that we find in medieval texts and works of art on this topic, from the body as a prison of the soul, according to some Church Fathers, to the texts that stage, in Latin and in the vernacular languages, debates between the body and the soul. From the senses designed as ‘windows of vices’ – in the tradition of Saint Jerome and others – to the glorification of the five senses in the liturgy and in the doctrine of the spiritual senses. From the close connection between the body, the senses, the faculty of imagination, the role of memory and of emotions, theorised by medieval philosophy and medicine, to the central role of the imagined and fantasised feminine body in the courtly lyric poetry of medieval Europe. From the body of Christ and of the saints affected by the ‘folly for Christ’ (*stultitia Christi*), to the psychosomatic sufferings of profane lovesickness, melancholy and folly that affect the characters of medieval romance. There are, therefore, a multitude of facets that cannot easily be separated from one another without the risk of losing the ‘depth’ of perspective.

At the base of this volume lies the conviction – developed in several years of investigations on medieval Romance literatures – that it is fundamental for the future of medieval studies to relate the literary masterpieces examined with the episteme, that is, the medical texts and also the philosophical texts that convey and summarise the knowledge of the time. It is, of course, rather difficult to identify direct sources, since it is almost impossible to know with certainty if an author has or has not read a given treatise or *summa*. But these investigations allow us to reconstruct, through well-founded hypotheses, the ‘imagery’ behind literary metaphors: an imagery that is, very probably, fed not only by literary references, but by the entire knowledge of the time – since medieval cultural discourses had much more permeable borders compared to the boundaries of disciplines nowadays, and they were in many cases not produced by specialists in the modern sense of the term, but, rather, by people one may characterise as cross-skilled intellectuals². A strict disciplinary compartmentalisation in the study of the Middle Ages would, therefore, distance us even more from understanding the cultural discourse of that time³.

2 I return here to some concepts I have already anticipated in G. Gubbini, “Immaginazione e malinconia, occhi ‘pieni di spiriti’ e cuori sanguinanti: alcune tracce nella lirica italiana delle origini”, in F. Suitner (ed.), *La poesia in Italia prima di Dante*, Ravenna, 2017, 29–39, in part. 32.

3 Proof of such a complex and ‘interdisciplinary’ medieval cultural discourse can, for example, be detected in the condemnation pronounced by the bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, in 1277 which censured, at the same time, some of the most important and advanced philosophical currents of the time and a love treatise – imbued with courtly culture and fundamental for the developing of medieval Romance literatures – the *De amore* of Andrew the Chaplain. On the 1277 condemnation, see H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, London-Cambridge MA 1991; A. de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1991; F. X. Putallaz, *Insolente liberté. Controverses et*

Grasping the complex and stratified nature of medieval cultural discourse is not an easy task, but the path for such an approach has been, in part, already shown by some crucial works that medieval studies have produced so far⁴. This volume contains the papers presented during an interdisciplinary and international conference that took place at Freie Universität Berlin in November 2014: truly interdisciplinary, thanks to the participation of major specialists of medieval literature, medicine, and philosophy; and truly international, as the speakers came from four major traditions of medieval studies – from Germany, the United States, France and Italy.

A few words on the occasion of the conference are called for. It was planned in the context of my fellowship, generously financed by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at Freie Universität Berlin, for my project (closely connected to the theme of the conference) ‘Breaths, Sighs and Spirits in Medieval Romance Literature’. I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for the generosity of their support, for their cultural involvement in the promotion of humanities and their meritocratic approach toward international scholars. I would like here to thank Joachim Küpper, who was my host at the Freie Universität: when I met him, I was ‘exiled’ from my country, I was completely new to the German university system and he has always stimulated and supported me with excellent scholarly conversations and extremely insightful advice.

The following paragraphs will give a brief overview of the content of the different contributions – following not the order of their presence in this book, but some fundamental themes that connect the different essays of the volume.

condamnations au XIII^e siècle, Paris 1995; L. Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle à l'Université de Paris (XIII^e–XIV^e siècles)*, Paris, 1999; C. König-Pralong, *Avènement de l'aristotélisme en terre chrétienne*, Paris 2005; S. Piron, “Le plan de l'évêque. Pour une critique interne de la condamnation du 7 Mars 1277”, *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 78 (2011), 383–415.

⁴ This introduction *does not* aim to be a review of the works produced in medieval studies with such an interdisciplinary approach, nor of the scientific production on the ‘body and spirit’ theme (and on the closely connected motifs). I will therefore quote some titles here that have been particularly ‘inspiring’ for this book: the volumes of T. Gregory et alii (eds.), *Lessico intellettuale europeo*; the volumes of A. Paravicini-Bagliani et alii (eds.), *Micrologus*; C. Casagrande, S. Vecchio (eds.), *Anima e corpo nella cultura medievale*, Florence 1999; S. G. Nichols, A. Kablitz, A. Calhoun (eds.), *Rethinking Medieval Senses: Heritage/Fascinations/Frames*, Baltimore 2008; R. H. Bloch, A. Calhoun, J. Cerquiglini–Toulet, J. Küpper and J. Patterson (eds.), *Rethinking the New Medievalism*, Baltimore 2014; E. Palazzo (ed.), *Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge*, Paris 2016; D. Boquet, P. Nagy (eds.), *La chair des émotions. Pratiques et représentations corporelles de l'affectivité au Moyen Âge, Médiévales* 61 (2011); D. Boquet, P. Nagy, *Sensible Moyen Âge. Une histoire des émotions dans l'Occident médiéval*, Paris 2015.

The first article of the book is a contribution by Danielle Jacquart (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), entitled *La notion philosophico-médicale de spiritus dans l'Avicenne latin*. This essay analyses the meaning, the role and the nuances that the term and the concept of *spiritus* have in the different Latin 'translations' of the works of Avicenna. In fact, Avicenna repeatedly refers to 'spirit' – but, as the essay highlights, without clearly stating its origin and nature. In order to try to better understand this concept in Avicenna's thought, the essay follows the different instances of this term in different works, and in particular in the following texts: *De anima*, *Canon*, *De viribus cordis* and *De animalibus*. The *spiritus* in the works of Avicenna is quite omnipresent, as highlighted by the author of the essay, but its role is 'multifaceted' so to speak – precisely because this subtle substance is not immaterial but, at the same time, it is distinguished from the merely 'bodily' elements. *Spiritus* is, in fact, the special link between body and spirit, and it is also connected, in Avicenna, with celestial bodies and with the male semen. The result of the analysis shows the complexity and variety of ideas that the Middle Ages linked to the concept of *spiritus*: in particular, the essay shows that the term acquires different but complementary meanings in different works of Avicenna, according to the different perspectives adopted by the author when writing medical or more philosophically oriented texts.

The stratified richness of the conceptual 'hub' constituted by *spiritus* is present and analysed also in the contribution *Corps et esprit: les olhs espiritaus de Bernard de Ventadour et la maladie de Tristan* by the editor of this volume (Gaia Gubbini, Ludwig Maximilians-Universität München). This essay is divided into two sections – closely linked to one another precisely by the role played by the stratified and multiple medieval concept of 'spirit', and by its complex relationship with the body. The first part is dedicated to the analysis of the expression in langue d'oc *olhs espiritaus* contained in a very important song of the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, *Chantars no pot gaire valer*. In this first section of the article, the expression 'eyes full of spirit' is connected to both Patristic and medical texts. The second section is devoted to the Anglo-Norman texts in verses on Tristan and Iseut: the *Tristan et Yseut* of Bérout, the one of Thomas d'Angleterre, and two different (but very similar) anonymous texts known as the *Folies Tristan* (the *Folie de Berne* and the *Folie d'Oxford*). The relationship between fictitious and real maladies of the character of Tristan is investigated, connecting the 'symptoms' to the medical discourse of the time. In both of its sections, this essay shows how the entangled relationship between body and spirit plays a key role in some of the literary masterpieces of medieval France and Anglo-Norman England, and that the dominant note of such an interconnection seems to be the 'psychosomatic' dimension.

A crucial element of this connection between body and spirit is to be found in the five senses, analysed in the essay *Les cinq sens, le corps et l'esprit* by Éric

Palazzo (Université de Poitiers-CESCM, IUF). The symbolic meaning of the five senses in the authors of late Antiquity and of the Middle Ages is rooted in the ‘unity’ of body and spirit. This unity, the essay explains, is, in turn, at the basis of the twofold medieval doctrine of the bodily and spiritual senses. The essay continues and explains the development of this doctrine – and its influence on the liturgy – through the centuries, highlighting the milestones of this history. After a period dominated by the demonisation of the sinful dimension of the bodily five senses – strongly present, for example, in Saint Jerome – a fundamental turning point on this theme is to be found in Saint Augustine’s thought, which deepened the doctrine of the spiritual senses as well as shaped and developed the concepts of inner sense and of synaesthesia. The further development of the conceptualisation of the five senses shows, for example in the case of Saint Bernard, how the five senses play the role of ‘mediator’ between God and humankind. Thus, the essay sheds light on the twofold role played by the five senses in the history of Christian thinking, namely that humankind can either reach God thanks to the help of the spiritual senses, or definitively lose itself in the sinful and fleeting pleasures of the five bodily senses.

Skin, senses and emotions: these themes – intimately connected to the ‘body and spirit’ conceptual knot investigated in this volume – are addressed in the contribution *Skin, the inner senses, and the readers’ inner life in the Aviarium of Hugh of Fouillooy and related texts* of Sarah Kay (New York University). In this essay, the author argues that Hugh of Fouillooy’s *Aviarium* – and the literary bestiary tradition related to this text – builds a close connection between the bodily substance of the manuscript (the skin) and the emotional dimension of the spiritual self of the reader. Hugh uses sensorial imagery with high awareness – as the author demonstrates – emphasising the relationship between external and inner senses, in order to overcome the clear-cut separation ‘flesh vs. spirit’ that was at the basis of earlier bestiary production. The central role of imagination and of the senses is highlighted in the prologue of the *Aviarium*. The essay argues that the *Aviarium* exploits the similarity between the hide used for the manuscript and the skin of the human being in order to convey a ‘mothering’ and parental theme and, through all this process, the ‘awakening’ of the imagination and of the inner life of the reader. Seeing and touching the parchment changes the practice of reading entirely, which becomes for the medieval reader a ‘second skin’, as the essay defines it. Through such an experience, the reader can shift from visual image to the touch of the parchment and, via the external senses, advance to the internal senses and to the inner self.

At the centre of the essay *The Medical, the Philosophical, and the Theological Discourses on the Senses: Congruences and Divergences* by Joachim Küpper (Freie Universität Berlin) stand the different conceptions about human perception at

play in the Middle Ages. The paper argues that during the medieval period different discourses divulge different ideas about the senses. In particular, the medical, philosophical, and theological discourses diverge with regard to a specific point – the post-sensory faculties of the mind that govern the inner senses. If the different faculties (*virtutes*) are common to human beings and beasts, what is the difference between them? Where the medical discourse conceives such a difference as a gradual and not a fundamental one, philosophy and theology cannot agree on this point – since the question involves a fundamental issue: free will and moral responsibility. The essay shows that such divergent anthropologies on the human perception co-existed within medieval discourse, and even in the textual production of specific individuals, depending on the field to which their various texts pertain. As a proof of this medieval ‘pluralism’ an emblematic passage from Petrus Hispanus’ *Quaestiones de animalibus* is analysed, where the author – a professor of medicine, later elected pope with the name of John XXI – describes sexual intercourse and the female intimate parts following two different functions, pleasure and procreation. These two functions are in this passage regarded as independent from one another and, surprisingly enough for a Christian point of view, they are not ‘hierarchised’. The essay shows how Petrus Hispanus as a medical author admits certain concepts to his scientific writings that as a theologian and as a pope he would (later) condemn.

The senses, their presence, their relationship to reason and the moral discourse of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* are at the centre of the essay *Petrarch and the Senses. Petrarch’s Anthropology of Love and the Scholastic Transformation of Christian Ethics* of Andreas Kablitz (Universität zu Köln). Through a close reading of Sonnet No. 6, *Sì traviato è ’l folle mi’ desio*, Kablitz detects quotations and reuses of Thomas Aquinas’ texts – a device that recurs in other poems by the author. The essay highlights how, though apparently the reuse of passages of Scholastic origin in the context of love poetry seems to operate an ‘inversion’ of Thomistic moral discourse, in fact Petrarch mirrors in his poetry the contradictions and the inconsistencies already existent in Scholastic ethics. In particular, at centre stage is the complicated, tortured relationship between reason and the senses. After original sin, the essay shows, and therefore after the loss of the *iustitia originalis* – a gift from God to humankind, to allow humans to control desire and the sensual drives and to direct themselves instead towards God – reason cannot be conceived as completely independent from sensorial and sensual involvements. As the effect of original sin, reason is inevitably bound to the senses: therefore, marginalised, reason cannot guarantee a safeguard for humankind against sin. The result of the battle among reason, senses and will thus remain uncertain – and Petrarch has imbued his texts with this suspended contradiction.

The essay *Language, Soul, & Body (Parts)* by Stephen G. Nichols (Johns Hopkins University) is focused on the relationship between the sexually-gendered body and the complex dynamics of mind, soul and body. The author highlights the paradoxical pattern of the coexistence of two contradictory elements: on the one hand, the rich series of names devoted to the erogenous zones and, on the other, the cultural norm and prohibition according to which the parts of shame should have no name. The essay analyses the obsession that Antiquity and the Middle Ages had with these human organs, an obsession that, far from being dispelled by the oft-repeated prohibition of naming the sexually-gendered body, is rooted in the highly problematic relationship present in every human being between *mens* (mind), *ratio* (reason), *anima* (soul) and *animus* (will) – as a passage of Isidore examined in the essay clearly states. Such a polarised and coexistent contradiction is strongly present also in Troubadour poetry, as the essay shows: in this literary tradition we find a ‘spiritualised’ version of the *fin’amors*, but also the exuberant exaltation of sexuality – accompanied by a very physical description of male intimate parts. The ‘boomerang effect’ – as the author defines it – of the haunting presence of what should be kept silent and unnamed is particularly strong in a key figure of Western philosophy, Peter Abelard, and, especially, in the dense passage of the *Historia calamitatum* – a fundamental text to understand medieval France – where he narrates his castration full of anguish.

The exaltation of bodily and, in particular, sensual pleasures is a dominant note in the texts analysed in the essay *Bodies without Minds, Minds without Bodies. Tales of the Night in the Fabliaux and Boccaccio* by R. Howard Bloch (Yale University). The contribution analyses a special sub-genre present in ancient French fabliaux and in the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, ‘the tale of a single night’, that is to say tales that develop within the time frames from dusk to dawn. These texts convey a special relationship with time, sexuality and love. If, in the fabliaux analysed, the bodily pleasures are not connected to previous sentimental connections between the characters and are therefore the simple expression of sexual drives, in one of Boccaccio’s tales examined, *novella* IX, 6, the sexual intercourse of Pinuccio and Niccolosa is almost ‘prepared’ in the diegesis by a mutual, shared desire. In fact the two characters of Pinuccio and Niccolosa, as the essay explains, fall in love with each other long before the night of love – their romance, in contrast to the cases of sexual intercourse present in the fabliaux, preexists their first night and it lasts after it: they will continue their relationship with many nights after the first one. Therefore, compared to the fabliaux, in Boccaccio’s *novella* there appears a different concept of time and love, according to which the body and its sensual pleasures involve mind, will and desire – where sex meets romance, as it were.

The body and spirit meet and intertwine in the ‘psychosomatic’ medieval malady *par excellence*: the malady of love, which is at the centre of the essay *Amour, imagination et poésie dans l'œuvre médicale de Gentile da Foligno* of Aurélien Robert (CNRS, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance). This contribution focuses on the commentary of the 14th-century Italian physician Gentile da Foligno on the *Canon* of Avicenna, and in particular on the section devoted to the analysis of love's passion. The questions that Gentile da Foligno places at the centre of his commentary – on the origin of the passion of love, on the influence of the imagination on the body, on the power of words in the physical expression of passion – are conceived by the physician as an ‘organic’ system: such a perspective, tackling all these questions simultaneously constitutes a novelty in the panorama of the treatises of the time. Medieval physicians generally stressed the strong role of imagination in the development of amorous passion: however, they also underlined bodily dysfunctions as preconditions linked to the origin of such a malady. The essay highlights that, compared to this tradition, Gentile da Foligno instead accentuates the importance of dysfunctions of the mind as the key element for love malady to develop. Moreover, in Gentile da Foligno's commentary we find a crucial element for the relationship between literature and medicine in 14th-century Italy: an enhancement of the central function of poetry and of its connection with the malady of love. The essay demonstrates how, in Gentile da Foligno's analysis of love malady, the description of the characteristics of the love-sick come very close to those of the (love-)poet.

The essay *Melancholy and Creativity in Petrarch* by Massimo Ciavolella (University of California Los Angeles) is dedicated to the close relationship between the intellectual dimension of creativity and the key humoral imbalance and (consequent) malady of melancholy in the *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* and in the *Secretum* of Petrarch. The author examines the psycho-physiological dynamics that influence the relationship between melancholy and poetic creativity in Petrarch. In these dynamics the role played by imagination and the function of *phantasmata* in engendering melancholy is of crucial importance: in fact, the essay explains, the heat caused by desire and by the multiplications of spirits ‘alters’ the receptacle of the brain containing the power of estimation. Such an overheating of this specific receptacle is at the origin of the power and the endurance of the images – the *phantasmata*, causing, amongst other symptoms, dryness of the brain and the consequent increase of the melancholic humour. The alteration of the power of estimation creates the crucial problem that traverses the works of Petrarch as a *fil rouge*: the ‘confusion’ and conflation of physical desire and the moral good, as the essay highlights. In Petrarch the invincible power of the *phantasmata* finds its perfect representation in the obsessive presence of Laura's image – the phantasm that overwhelms the faculty of estimation

of the lyric ‘I’ and takes the place of the good. An illusory object of desire, Laura becomes in fact a *fictio* fixed in the imagination, engendering the melancholic passion that permeates the *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* and that is acknowledged as the obstacle to salvation in the *Secretum*.

At the centre of the essay *Animae sequuntur corpora. Le philosophe, les astres et la physiognomonie au XIII^e siècle* by Irene Caiazzo (CNRS, PSL, Laboratoire d’Études sur les Monothéismes) is the bodily and moral portrait of the intellectual contained in 13th-century texts on physiognomy. Physiognomy, ‘reborn’ in the West in the 12th century, fully develops in the 13th century and tries to understand the disposition of a person based on their appearance; it establishes, during the Middle Ages, a close connection between medicine, psychology, philosophy and astrology. The essay analyses in particular one of the first commentaries to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomy*, the commentary of William of Aragon. One of the main concerns of this commentary is to establish what kind of relationship exists between body and soul: the commentary highlights the interdependence of body and soul – a basic concept for the science of physiognomy – but, at the same time, it stresses the supremacy of the soul over the body. William of Aragon’s text argues that, through the study of physiognomy, it is possible to detect a human being’s natural attitude towards science: the commentary emphasises that it is only the attitude towards science that is possible to recognise – and not an intellectual ‘in act’. The essay shows that the commentary of William of Aragon founds the ‘scientific’ basis of physiognomy in astrology through the implementation of a cosmology. This strong role of astrology in the physical and intellectual formation of human beings – and therefore in the analysis of physiognomy – is a medieval innovation.

The relationships between body and spiritual substances and between celestial and terrestrial bodies are fundamental in order to understand the dynamics of the notion of ‘virtual contact’: this is the topic at the core of the essay *Le « contact virtuel » entre un esprit et un corps et l’action à distance* of Nicolas Weill-Parot (École Pratique des Hautes Études, EPHE PSL). The notion of *contactus virtualis* has a double dimension: the action of a spirit on a body and the action of a body on a spiritual substance. The essay stresses the importance of Thomas Aquinas’ distinction – present in his *Commentary of Sentences* (I, d. 37, q.3, art. 1, co.) – of two sorts of touch, the proper one, where the extremities touch each other, and the ‘metaphorical’ touch, that takes place only with an action at a distance (and this is specific to angels). But how could such a concept of the action of a spiritual entity on a body be conceived and formulated in the context of an Aristotelian philosophy which implied a ‘contact’ between the agent and the patient? As the contribution shows, different thinkers, in different contexts and dealing with different subjects, gave different answers to this question. Thomas Aquinas

uses this concept of *contactus virtualis* several times in order to explain the action of a spiritual substance – such as a demon, an angel or God – on a body. But the contribution also stresses that several 13th-century authors conceive ‘action at a distance’ the other way round: that is to say, the action that a body can exert on a spiritual substance, and, in particular, on one of the soul’s faculties. The contribution highlights, moreover, that a special form of *contactus virtualis* is to be detected in the contact between celestial bodies and, distant from them, terrestrial ones.

The simultaneous presence of the bodily dimension and of the spiritual one is a key element of religious literature and mysticism, as shown in this volume by two essays. The first essay dealing with religious production is the one by Franco Suitner (Università di Roma Tre), entitled *La poésie mystique: Iacopone da Todi et les contradictions de l'âme*. The idea of the body present in the poetry of Iacopone da Todi – the most important Franciscan poet of medieval Italian literature – is complex and stratified. As the contribution highlights, Saint Francis, *alter Christus*, has modelled his religious trajectory on that of Christ. Franciscan mysticism is therefore Christocentric, as the body of Christ – simultaneously ‘vessel’ of all worldly pains and triumphantly resurrected – plays a crucial role in it. In the poetry of Iacopone da Todi there is a double evaluation of the bodily dimension: in fact on one hand, the body is an obstacle for the elevation of the soul, but on the other it is important to keep it in good health, the body being the ‘medium’ of our penitence before God. The spiritual dimension – the other ‘pole’ of the complex couple at the basis of the present book – is also perceptible in a contradictory, yet intense way in the religious production of Iacopone da Todi, and seems to mirror the contradictions of the body just evoked. In fact, where some texts refer to the soul in a ‘plain’ way, according to which the spiritual dimension represents simply the ‘good’ side of humankind, in some other *laude* we find more ambiguous passages that insist on the soul’s freedom and seem – as the contribution highlights – to echo certain theories linked to the coeval Heresy of the Free Spirit.

The last contribution that ends the volume, the essay *Retorica delle passioni. La preghiera tra anima e corpo* of Carla Casagrande (Università degli studi di Pavia) is dedicated to the entanglement of body and spirit and to its role in the prayer of the mystic author Jean Gerson. The article insists on a crucial element, intimately connected to the ‘body and spirit’ enquiry at the basis of this volume: the importance of emotions in the Middle Ages. Jean Gerson in fact, at the end of Middle Ages, builds in his works what the author of the essay defines as a ‘rhetoric of the affective communication with God’ – therefore: a communication entirely grounded on emotions. Starting and ending with Jean Gerson, the essay analyses the idea, broadly shared during the Middle Ages, that emotions play a

fundamental role in prayer – investigating, moreover, which kinds of emotions are present, and in which order, in prayer, according to authors like Augustine, Hugh of Saint Victor, William of Auvergne and, of course, Jean Gerson. The investigation on the emotions in prayer also involves the participation of the body in this process. However, as the essay highlights, the presence of the body is not to be detected in the emotions in prayer themselves, which, directed to God, have to be purified and detached from earthly involvements. The body is present in the prayer through the voice, the gesture: it helps the person praying to move himself – and, therefore, to make the prayer more intense, and deeper.

As I have tried to sketch out here, the ‘body and spirit’ topic has been tackled in this volume with a richness and a broadness of perspectives that would not have been possible without an interdisciplinary approach – combining literature, philosophy and medicine. The present book, dealing with a crucial question such as this, of prime importance throughout the Middle Ages, moreover explores further fundamental themes intimately related to the ‘body and spirit’ question – such as lovesickness, the five senses, the role of memory, passions and emotions – so as to shed new light on the complex nature of the medieval Self.

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