7 Taking the "Dis" Out of Disability

Martyrs, Mothers, and Mystics in the Middle Ages[1]

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Introduction

The Middles Ages are often portrayed as a time in which people with physical disabilities in the Latin West were ostracized, on the grounds that such conditions demonstrated personal sin and/or God's judgment. This was undoubtedly the dominant response to disability in various times and places during the 5th–15th centuries, but the total range of medieval responses is much broader and more interesting. In particular, the 13th–15th century treatment of three groups – martyrs, mothers, and mystics – whose physical "defects" were often understood as signs of special connection to God in this life (and who were often represented as retaining these signs in the life to come) challenges both medieval and modern notions of beauty, disfigurement, and bodily perfection, particularly as the notion is applied to our (everlasting) final end.

Monsters, Hierarchies, and Social Norms

Contemporary concepts of disability as they appear in legal, medical, educational, philosophical, and activist contexts were not, of course, operative in the Middle Ages.[2] As Douglas Baynton has observed, there has been a significant shift in attitudes since then toward human beings and their place in the world – a shift that can be roughly characterized as a move from comparing subjects against a standard of the "natural" to a standard of the "normal."[3]

The medieval emphasis on nature, function, and hierarchy had two primary sources. On the one hand, it stems from an inherited Platonic and Aristotelian worldview centered on forms as eternal templates against which all particulars could be measured; form was closely linked to function, and so the division of all living and non-living things into ranked genera and species also attributed particular functions to each of those species. By the 13th century, this worldview was, in turn, combined with the belief – widely accepted in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish communities – that there existed a God who created the world according to a divine plan, in which all things had a proper place (and, thus, a proper function), and who expected human beings to respect and maintain this created order.

Complex hierarchies within creation were understood to be part of this divine plan, both within and across species and genera. Thus, men were seen as superior in nature to women, human beings as superior in nature to cows, and horses as superior in nature to grass.[4] Comparative rankings like "superior to" or "lower than" were derived both from the sets of capacities a given species or genera was understood to possess and, within a species, from individuals' relative abilities to exercise those capacities. Thus, cows were considered better or higher than grass insofar as they were understood to possess sensory capacities such as locomotion, sight, and hearing in addition to the vegetative capacities (ability to reproduce, take in nutrition, and grow) they had in common with grass; men were considered superior in nature to women insofar as they were perceived as better able to exercise the rational capacities common to all human beings.[5]

In this context, the sorts of physical, emotional, and mental conditions we today discuss under the umbrella term of "disability" were understood primarily as a deviation from the (God-given) natural order. A calf born with two heads might be called "monstrous" or a "mistake of nature"; an unusually intelligent or articulate woman might be called a false or "pseudo-woman," as Margeurite of Porete was at her trial in 1310.[6] Deviations from the natural order could also be viewed as miraculous and observed with varying degrees of fascination and alarm: literature from this period is rife with characters whose monstrous natures make them objects of special interest.[7] Nature "herself" also appears personified in the literature of this period, as in Alan of Lille's famous *Plaint of Nature* and *Anticlaudianus*.

Importantly, this natural order was seen as fixed and stable. The species-form of cow or human being or grass is an unchanging template that accounts for both what a thing is and what it should be. In this context, perfection is a matter of activating the various potentialities natural to a species and thus performing the function of that sort of species well.[8] Individuals who lacked some of the potentialities seen as natural to their species, who were somehow impaired in their ability to actualize them, or who possessed abilities not natural to their species were considered defective or unnatural.[9]

This perception famously changes in the transition to the early modern period, as forms (and with them, function and teleology) lose popularity as a key explanatory feature of philosophical, theological, and scientific accounts.[10] The fixed nature of such forms is given up when the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* ushers in the age of evolutionary theory. In its place, new statistical and economic measurements for populations (human, bovine, etc.) combine with social optimism to create a worldview in which human beings are seen not as occupying a God-given role in a fixed order but rather as an evolving species with unlimited potential for improvement. Nature-with-a-capital-N ceases to set the standard for either individuals within a species or a species itself; in its place

arises the statistical norm and the concept of the "normal."[11] On this view, various physical, emotional, and mental conditions were judged as more or less favorable for the survival – and improvement – of the species. Those conditions seen as less adaptive or beneficial were termed "subnormal" or "abnormal" and viewed as dispositions that should be eliminated (if possible) for the sake of the human race as a whole.[12] Although virtually all current scholarship in disability studies challenges this view, the conception of the statistical norm and "the normal" remains the dominant paradigm in which contemporary discussions take place.

One of the central differences between 13th–15th century attitudes and modern attitudes toward disability, then, is that contemporary discussions often assume a broadly social, changeable framework, as opposed to the earlier "natural" perspective. Contemporary discussions focus, for example, on the extent to which disabilities are socially constructed; they address how these constructions impact the lives of those subsequently labeled as disabled; they argue about what action should be taken in response.[13] Throughout, they accept that social equality is a good for which we should strive. This perspective differs significantly from the medieval emphasis on fixed hierarchies and the portrayal of defects and monsters as (potentially fascinating) exceptions to the natural order.[14]

At the same time, the conditions labeled as defective and monstrous in the Middle Ages overlap extensively with the ones labeled as disabilities today. This is in large part because the (sometimes spoken, sometimes unspoken) paradigm in Western culture for both the "natural" and the "normal" is the able-bodied white male, against whom all others are judged and found wanting. Tradition assigns positive characteristics such as rationality, self-control, independence, and physical and emotional strength to people who fit this paradigm, while those who fall short of fitting the physical model (by, say, lacking a penis or pale skin or physical strength) are typically seen as falling short of the emotional and mental model as well.[15] When medieval scholastics follow Aristotle, for instance, in defining human beings as rational animals, they also adopt the Aristotelian assumption that the best-functioning version of such a creature is one who actualizes rational, sensory, and vegetative capacities to their fullest extent – by, among other things, possessing the semen from which other such animals are generated. The lack of such semen is seen as indicating a more passive, incomplete, or unfinished nature that is unable to actualize other potentialities as well, most crucially the capacities of intellect and will.[16]

Judged against this paradigm, irrationality, overwhelming passions, emotional or physical dependence on others, mental or physical suffering, and/or infirmity (blindness, deafness, chronic illness, etc.) become mental, emotional, and physical disabilities in precisely the same way that conditions that impede or prevent "normal" functioning are constructed as disabilities today. As Baynton observes,

> The natural and the normal both are ways of establishing the universal, unquestionable good and right …. Both are constituted in large part by being set in opposition to culturally variable notions of disability – just as the natural was meaningful in relation to the monstrous and the deformed, so are the cultural meanings of the normal produced in tandem with disability.[17]

The widespread acceptance of these beliefs about human nature and proper function testifies to the deep-rooted and intrinsically linked systems of misogyny, racism, and ableism that still dominate Western culture today. At the same time, as I demonstrate in the following sections, these are not the only attitudes present in the 13th–15th centuries toward people who violate "natural" physical, mental, and emotional ideals. The devotional emphasis in this time on the humanity of the incarnate Christ creates a space in which three distinct groups – martyrs, mothers, and mystics – experience aberrations from the "natural" not as distancing them from perfection but as connecting them more closely with God. These groups may be the exception to the general rule, but they are widespread and (in the case of mothers) extremely common exceptions that fundamentally challenge the superiority of the presumed paradigm and present a world (namely, heaven!) in which perfection is not tied to ideal function.

Christ and the Martyrs: Glorified "Defects" and Alternative Embodiment

In the 13th–15th centuries, an increased emphasis on the humanity (vs. the divinity) of Christ combines with a stress on *imitatio Christi* to undergird a devotional piety that portrays human beings as gaining access to God through shared human experiences – which importantly include mental, emotional, and physical suffering.[18] Because the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity is understood to be both fully human and fully divine, Christ's body becomes a subject of intense interest. Among other things, Christ's body is portrayed as the exemplar for human bodies (since to redeem the human race, Christ had to have a body that was subject to all sorts of conditions that human bodies generally undergo, including hunger, thirst, illness, and pain). Thus, both the general state of his body during his earthly life and the particular state of his body post-resurrection prove of keen interest. As we'll see in the remainder of this section, discussions of Christ's body both pre- and post-death also serve as important templates for speculations about the resurrected bodies of the martyrs. What emerges is a picture where being impaired in various ways (such as being blinded, crippled, flayed, or even decapitated) forms no impediment to carrying out the activities that constitute a happy life for human beings. Defects that were seen as stemming from or caused by sin are barred from being part of the afterlife, but Christ's and the martyrs' eternally 'broken' bodies are held up as

more glorious than their "whole" counterparts insofar as they testify to their lived experiences. This opens the door to a philosophical theology of disability that is sensitive to the experiences and desires of those who experience them and that does not necessarily require disabilities being "fixed" to participate in the highest form of eternal life.

One of the most striking features of 13th–15th century Latin Christian piety is its devotion to the human, suffering Jesus. The Savior whom 13th–15th century Christians are counseled to emulate is not the *Christ Victorix* of the Renaissance and early modern period – an attractive and strongly muscled white man who has conquered death and rises into the air in glory, placed above the human subjects who cower beneath him in fear and awe (Figure 7.1).

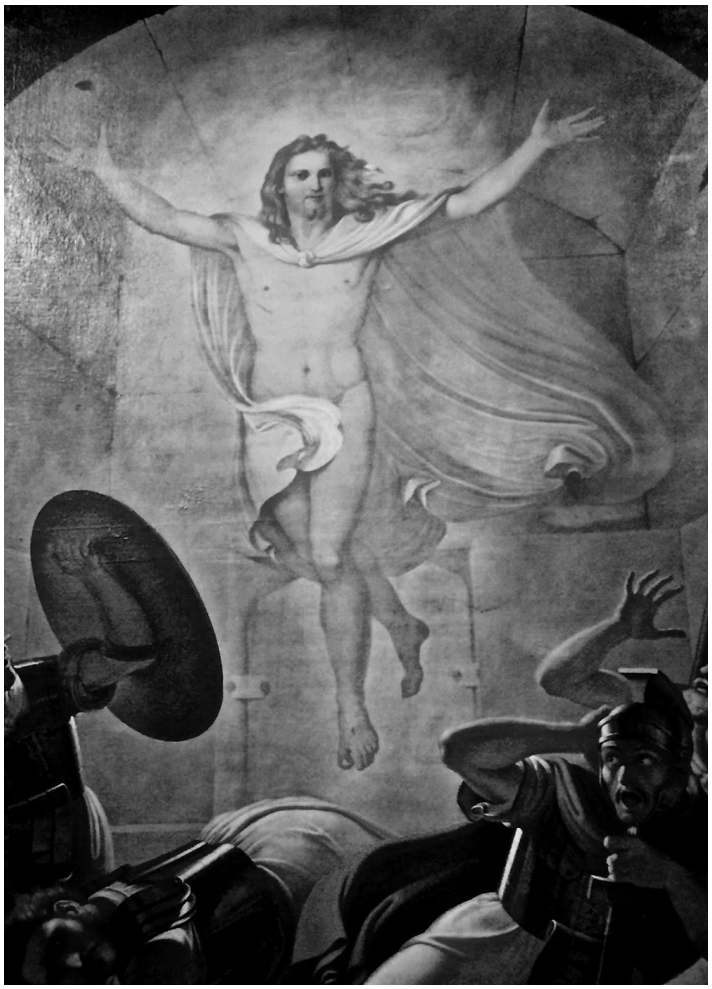

Figure 7.1 Resurrection of Christ by Michele Ridolfi (1793–1854), in Cathedral of St. Martin in Lucca, Italy.

Instead, artistic representations of the pre-passion Christ from the late medieval period portray him as an ordinary-looking figure generally indistinguishable from those around him (apart from the position he occupies as central figure in healing, teaching, etc.). The most common images of the adult Christ in this period portray him during the Passion, suffering humiliation, flagellation, crucifixion, and finally death. In these representations, Christ is often emaciated and bleeding profusely from his side, as in Figure 7.2, where the blood spurting from the wound in his breast runs all the way through a crack in the earth and onto a human skull (thus representing Christ's victory over death and redemption of both the living and the dead).

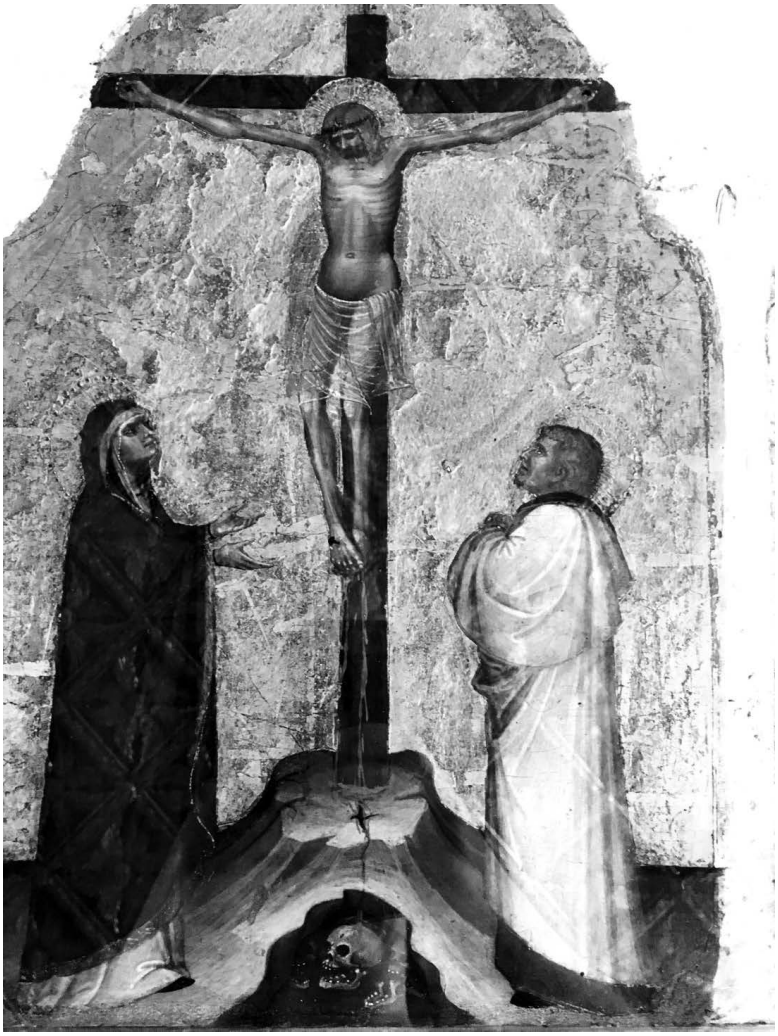

Figure 7.2 Christ crucified with the Virgin and John, Jacobello Alberegno (1375–1397) in Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy.

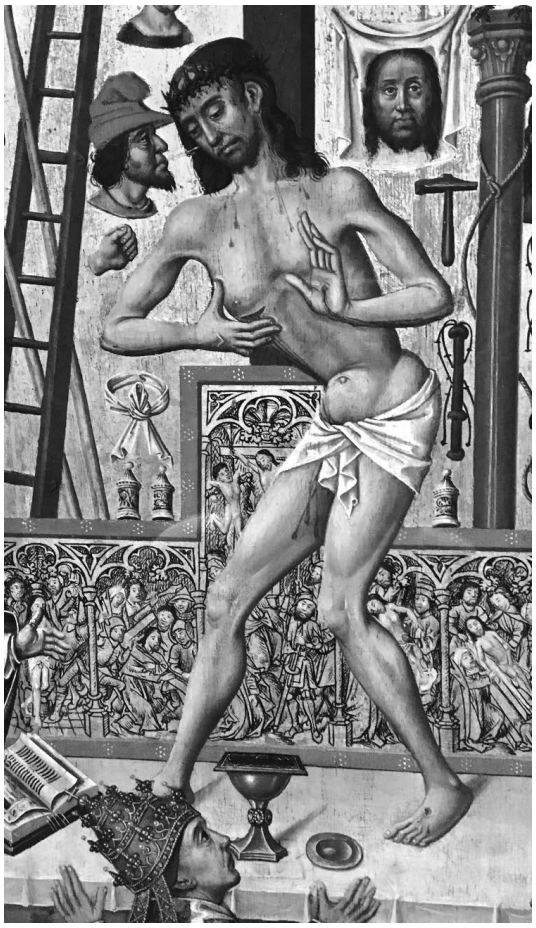

Figure 7.3 Special Exhibit at Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, Netherlands, April 2014.

Even representations of the risen Savior in this period typically show him bleeding from his wounds, particularly the wound in his side – which is usually quite prominent and often displayed by Christ to the viewer(s) both within and without the scene. The risen Christ is also often portrayed with the symbols of his suffering: flagellum, crown of thorns, blindfold, hammer that pounded in the nails into his hands and feet, and (as we see particularly clearly in Figure 7.3) even men spitting on his face. By contrast, Christ's wounds are barely visible in many later representations (see Figure 7.4).

The importance of Christ's suffering *as* one of us while suffering *for* all of us is enormous in the 13th–15th centuries, as philosophical and theological discussions as well as devotional texts and artistic representations attest. As Catherine of Siena writes in her Dialogue: "When my

Figure 7.4 Statue in east transept, Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, France.

Son was lifted up on the wood of the most holy cross, he did not cut off his divinity from the lowly earth of your humanity. So, though he was raised so high he was not raised off the earth. In fact, his divinity is kneaded into the clay of your humanity like one bread."[19]

Thomas Aquinas also argues in his treatise on Christ's nature in Part Three of the *Summa theologiae* [=ST] that Christ's "infirmities" – both before his Passion and after – serve as a greater link with human beings than his perfections; he also stresses the importance of Christ's spiritual over physical strength and beauty. In ST IIIa.14, Aquinas spends the entire question addressing the "defects" Christ was subject to in becoming Incarnate. He argues that insofar as God became fully human, the

body that God assumed needed to be subject to the whole range of defects and infirmities to which human beings are generally subject.[20] The doctrine of original sin entails that no post-lapsarian human being can possess ideal human physiology: hunger, thirst, pain, disease, and dying are inescapable realities of life until the Second Coming. The incarnate Christ must thus experience a natural share of these defects.

The question of exactly how many and what sort of defects and infirmities the incarnate Christ should be subject to, however, was the subject of hot debate. On one line of thinking, in order to redeem all the suffering caused by human sin, the Man of Sorrows needs to experience every single type of defect and sort of suffering of which human beings are capable.[21] On another line of thinking, since he is sinless, Christ should be maximally free from the consequences of sin (both natural or moral).[22] Not surprisingly, Aquinas takes a middle view: he maintains that because Christ assumes human nature in order to save it, he must have been subject to the sorts of defects post-lapsarian human beings are naturally subject to (e.g., hunger, thirst, disease, death); at the same time, because Christ was both born sinless and needed to be able to resist sin, he could not have suffered from any condition that would have been caused directly by sin or that would lead someone to commit a sin (such as certain sorts of ignorance or a lack of grace). Aquinas's conclusion is that Christ assumed a representative sample of the range of defects common to fallen human nature and that he assumed them "economically" (*dispensative*), in the appropriate amount and degree to satisfy for the sin of the human race, without going above and beyond.[23]

In this period, then, Christ is portrayed as having a typical human body, rather than one either superior to or worse than those around him. (He is not shown as particularly tall; or particularly short; he is represented as neither particularly beautiful nor unattractive; he is not possessed of superpowers; he is not blind or lame or deaf. In fact, in many representations, he is identifiable from those around him only by his specific halo.)

The nature of Christ's body after its death and resurrection, on the other hand, is much more remarkable, in part because its wounds remain. Between his rising from the dead and ascending to heaven, Christ is understood to possess a glorified body – incorruptible, capable of crossing great distances in a short time, able to walk through walls, and yet solid enough to be touched and to consume food. At the same time, Scripture depicts the risen Christ as appearing to various groups of people bearing the marks of his passion: a head wounded by thorns, hands and feet pierced by nails, and a side open from having a spear thrust into it. (The last two famously feature in the gospel of John's story of "doubting Thomas," whose claim that he will believe only when he has put his finger in the nail holes and hand in Christ's side is met by Christ's challenge to do exactly that when he appears to him later.)

Importantly, in the 13th–15th centuries, these features are seen not as deforming or disabling Christ but as prefiguring what the rest of the human race can expect for their own glorified bodies in the life to come. From at least Augustine onward, the particular features Christ's resurrected body possessed were taken as the basic template for all glorified human bodies post-resurrection.[24] These include not only the four "dotes" or gifts – clarity, agility, impassibility, and greater dignity of human nature[25] – but also the marks of martyrdom. In his discussion of Christ's resurrected body in ST IIIa 54, 4, for instance, Thomas Aquinas presents no fewer than five reasons for why it was appropriate for Christ's body to be resurrected complete with the scars from his crucifixion.[26] In the context of his triumph over death, not even what would have been fatal wounds constitute defects. Thus, Aquinas meets the worry that Christ's possessing open wounds "interrupts the continuity of his tissues" and that it would be sufficient for merely scars or traces of those wounds to remain, with the response that although the openings of Christ's wounds do mean that he doesn't have perfect physical integrity, he doesn't *need* physical integrity, because "the greater beauty of glory compensates for all this."[27] Not only does the fact that Christ doesn't possess smooth, unbroken skin, muscles, and tissue not entail that his body is less perfect – Aquinas claims that it is actually *more* perfect because of his wounds.

The retention of Christ's open wounds in his resurrected body is particularly significant for the medievals because they held that Christ's ascension to heaven was physical as well as spiritual, and that the body that the risen Christ showed his disciples is the same body that Christ possesses now in heaven, and which he will possess eternally. The thought of Christ's embodied presence in heaven delighted a number of contemplatives and mystics, such as Mechthild of Magdeburg, who wrote, "When I reflect that divine nature now includes bone and flesh, body and soul, then I become elated in great joy, far beyond what I am worth."

On the common medieval view, Christ brings human nature to its highest point with his embodied ascension into heaven – and the doctrine of the bodily resurrection entails that the rest of the human race will someday join him. As Mechthild goes on to describe that state: "The soul with its flesh is mistress of the house in heaven, sits next to the eternal Master of the house, and is most like him. There, eye reflects in eye, spirit flows in spirit, there, hand touches hand, there, mouth speaks to mouth, and there, heart greets heart."[28] In short, our resurrected bodies will be like Christ's in all important respects.

One consequence of this was taken to be that those who suffered and/or died for Christ's sake would rise with bodies that still displayed the marks of their martyrdom. The commonly referenced source-text here was (again) Augustine's discussion of the bodily resurrection in *City of God*.

So, for instance, Aquinas approvingly quotes Augustine's speculation that: "Perhaps in that kingdom we will see on the bodies of the martyrs the scars of the wounds which they underwent for the name of Christ, for [such scars] will not be deformity but dignity in them; and a certain beauty of virtue will shine in them."[29] In other words, conditions that would typically be considered defects – blindness, missing limbs, and so on – need not be removed or healed in the afterlife in order for the martyrs to participate in perfect happiness. This also fits with claims about Christ's wounds being beautiful rather than monstrous.

Of course, one can't conclude too much from these cases about general medieval reactions to disability in the afterlife: attitudes toward physical defects or conditions directly related to suffering for God's sake differ sharply from attitudes toward conditions understood to be caused by fallen human nature or culpable lacks in knowledge or grace. One of the most commonly accepted beliefs about the life to come was that resurrected human bodies would finally be free from the effects of sin, and so the default assumption was that those bodies would be immortal and incorruptible: "perfected" to reach the full measure of human potential without suffering from original-sin-caused distractions like hunger, thirst, or pain.

At the same time, the heavenly example of Christ's and the martyrs' eternally scarred and "imperfect" bodies offers a paradigm where the non-natural can not only remain but in which it has a place of honor. For our purposes, one of the most significant features of 13th–15th century discussions of these permanent marks is its suggestion that God need not fix us up when we get to heaven. God can glorify any sort of body, in any sort of condition.[30]

A more serious worry about Christ's wounds remaining open and martyrs like St. Denis (who was beheaded), St. Lucia (whose eyes were gouged out), and St. Bartholomew (who was flayed alive) retaining their wounds in the afterlife was the question of pain. As I will discuss more in the next two sections, the pain Christ suffers on the cross was understood to be an important element of the redemption of humanity, and the pain various martyrs suffered was a sign of their devotion and likeness to Christ. Yet the afterlife is described as a place where pain and sorrow will be no more, a place where all suffering – mental, emotional, and physical – will end. If Christ's side remains gaping open, Denis continues to carry his own head around (see Figure 7.5), and Bartholomew holds his skin like a coat,[31] these states must somehow be separated from the excruciating pain they would naturally involve.

And indeed, Aquinas is repeating a commonly offered solution when he writes that Christ could have prevented himself from experiencing pain by letting his divine beatitude overflow into his human body (although he, of course, didn't).[32] Post-resurrection, however, Christ can retain his wounds without feeling pain by allowing that overflow. More generally,

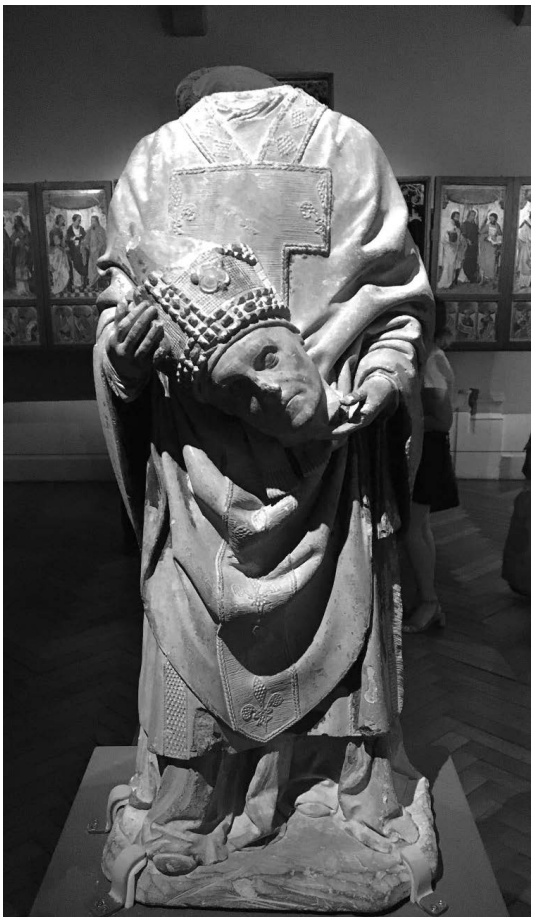

Figure 7.5 Late Gothic statue of St. Denis, limestone, formerly polychromed, Cluny Museum, Paris, France.

all glorified human beings will experience an overflow of beatitude in the life to come, from their souls to their bodies – an overflow that is the source of their bodies' new qualities and that will prevent those bodies from experiencing physical (or mental or emotional) pain.[33]

Such claims appear to challenge the "functional" view of human nature described in the previous section, *Monsters, Hierarchies, and Social Norms*. If human happiness depends on maximizing the actualization of particular sets of capacities peculiar to human beings, and given that human nature on this view demands a certain kind of body that can actualize those capacities, it seems as though human bodies would count as perfect (or perfected) only insofar as they were able to carry out those activities perfectly. Yet if Christ's hands and feet are permanently mangled by the nails pounded through them and the subsequent weight of his body bearing down on them on the cross, and if St. Lucia's eyes remain permanently removed from their sockets, then those parts of their

glorified bodies are not able to perform their "natural" functions. And yet, they count as the paradigm of perfected bodies in the afterlife!

What this demonstrates, I believe, is that although the default conception of human beings in this period involves their fully actualizing the physical potentialities associated with being a rational animal, the increased emphasis on Christ's humanity and passion in the 13th–15th centuries also inspires portrayals of an afterlife in which brokenness becomes beautiful, and open wounds become portals of grace. The true final end of all rational creatures is to know and love God; in the life to come, we will have opportunities for loving and ways of knowing in which functioning sense modalities are neither central nor required. Rather than causing pain or drawing attention to the pernicious effects of sin, conditions that differ radically from "ideal" human physicality can positively glorify the Creator.

Furthermore, as we will see in the section *Mothers: Bleeding, Leaking God-Bearers and Models of Christ's Humanity*, 13th–15th century authors represent Christ's experiences as further challenging conceptions of ideal human physicality insofar as he suffers patiently and bleeds (activities associated more with women), rather than waging war and siring children (activities prototypical of men, whose bodies were supposed to set the norm for humanity). Indeed, Christ is often portrayed as positively maternal – particularly insofar as he feeds his followers with his own body and suffers (and even dies) to give them life.

Mothers: Bleeding, Leaking God-Bearers and Models of Christ's Humanity

The later medieval emphasis on the humanity of Christ also reaches out to envelop Mary, the human mother of the incarnate God. Mary's experiences of suffering and bleeding in childbirth and then breastfeeding the infant Jesus are compared to her child's suffering and bleeding on the cross and then his feeding the world with the blood from his side. This leads to common representations of Christ and Mary interceding with God the Father for humanity, he indicating the wound in his side and she indicating the breast with which she fed him (see Figure 7.6).

Many representations of Christ from this time emphasize ways in which his body is like a mother's;[34] Jesus often has blood on his thighs as well as his side, and the wound in his side is traditionally placed where a woman's breast would be (see Figure 7.3). For our purposes, one of the most significant consequences of this trend is that it creates a space (artistic, theological, and philosophical) in which mothers' – and more generally women's – bodies are like God's. This forms an important counter to the traditional medieval assumption that women's bodies were defective and/or disabled (taken as a bad-difference). As in the case of the martyrs, it also provides an example of bodies judged imperfect against the measure of then-standard accounts of human nature being

Figure 7.6 The Intercession of Christ and the Virgin, Lorenzo Monaco (act. 1390–1423), the Cloisters Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

held up as not just non-deficient but actually *better* (insofar as more God-like) than their able-bodied counterparts.

As mentioned in the section, *Monsters, Hierarchies, and Social Norms*, the 13th–15th centuries inherited the Aristotelian and Galenic conception of human nature, according to which the paradigm of human physiology is the able-bodied, cis-gendered, white male. The ideal

human being excelled at both theoretical and practical reasoning; had control over his emotions; exercised willpower over his "baser" appetites for food, drink, and sex; and produced semen – the active seed required for generating more human beings. He had a strong body that was still sensitive to sense-data; Aristotle's concept of the "natural slave" was understood as referring to those human beings who were better suited to manual labor than study or power because of their physiology: rough skin, thick limbs, and so on. Natural rulers were sensitive enough to sense-impressions but also possessed the strength of will and mind not to be overwhelmed by them, and thus they appropriately governed those who either lacked such abilities or were less proficient in their exercise.[35]

On this Goldilocks version of human nature, where natural rulers were the "just right" version of human beings, women were seen as too susceptible to emotions and passions to fall into that category. Insofar as all human beings were understood to be rational animals created in God's image, women were viewed as having the same general make-up as men, both mentally and physically. Yet in women this general nature was viewed as being incomplete and/or "misbegotten" (*mas occasionatus*). Indeed, the Aristotelian biology widely accepted in the 13th–15th centuries portrayed women as possessing a defective version of the human form – one that left their bodies more passive (which is why their contribution to reproduction was limited to providing the matter that nourishes the active seed the man contributes), softer (and thus more susceptible to being overwhelmed by sensory stimuli and passions), and less rational (because the power of rationality could not be fully received in the matter that makes up the woman's body).[36] The main competitor to Aristotelian medical science, Galenic biology, gave women a more active role in reproduction, but even here the man's role is primary: the father serves as the principal active cause and the woman as the secondary active cause.[37] This received "wisdom" about the relative reproductive roles of men and women in turn grounded countless arguments for the natural subjection of women to men.[38]

This assumption about women being essentially disabled men, and medieval understandings of exactly what this entails for women's final end, is put in stark relief in a question that Augustine poses in *City of God* XXII.17, which is picked up by Peter Lombard and then everyone who writes commentaries on Lombard's *Sentences* (which is to say, everyone who receives a master's degree in theology from the University of Paris in the 12th–15th centuries) – namely, "In the bodily resurrection, will women be raised with male bodies?" The standard answer from Augustine onward is "No, women will be raised with female bodies," but there is a real tension present in many of the discussions of this question. On the one hand, as we've seen, women's bodies were viewed as inherently defective in ways that impact their functioning as human beings (particularly with respect to cognition); on the other hand, God

created woman as part of the divine plan, and God's plan does not include mistakes.

This tension caused many scholastic theologians to claim that the continued "infirmity" (*infirmitas*) of the female sex was compatible with the glorification of the human body in the afterlife.[39] In other words, it constitutes another case (this one involving half the human race) in which features understood as somehow defective were still argued to be present in perfected human bodies. And again, the reasoning is that God can glorify any condition of the human body God chooses to.

The general infirmities associated with women's bodies are taken to their logical extreme in the particular features of mothers' bodies; childbearing bodies display their incompleteness by leaking all sorts of fluids, with blood, tears, and milk being the paradigmatic examples.[40] And yet the late medieval surge of interest in the Virgin Mother and Christ emphasizes precisely these non-ideal experiences. The most popular devotional literature in this period encourages its readers to imagine and then focus on everyday events in Christ's life, beginning with the childhood of Mary and continuing through Christ's death and resurrection. This form of meditation was encouraged as a spiritual exercise crucial for generating appropriate emotional attitudes toward God, developing virtues, and shaping the will's love toward its proper object (Christ). It was also a form of devotion aimed particularly at women, using their greater emotionality and imagination to generate a closer connection to God.[41]

The most notable example of this genre is the late 13th-century *Meditationes vitae Christi* (commonly but erroneously attributed to Bonaventure), which is translated into a number of vernacular languages (including Nicholas Love's influential English version, the *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*) and remains wildly popular into the 16th century.[42] The *Meditations* inspires countless homely representations of the Holy Family (e.g., Figure 7.7, where Jesus tugs on Joseph's beard while Mary quietly reads a book) in addition to influencing theological and contemplative treatises.[43]

It explicitly instructs its readers to place themselves at various moments in the life of Mary and of Christ and to imagine what it would have been like to experience those moments with them. To help with this spiritual exercise, the text presents a number of vivid and engaging scenes and suggests ways in which readers can engage the episode.[44] (In the chapter on the Return from Egypt, for instance, the reader is asked to think of how tired the young Jesus's legs and feet must be from trotting behind the donkey and to imagine picking him up and carrying him for a way down the road. Later, after the Temptation, the reader is told to imagine an exhausted Christ asking the angels who attend him for his mother's cooking, and the angels flying to Mary to pick up a meal.)[45]

Use of this sort of meditation is described as enflaming the heart to imitate Mary's and Christ's virtuous examples, increasing knowledge of

Figure 7.7 Relief of the Holy Family, attributed to Lux Maurus, active in Kempton from 1517 to 1527, Cluny Museum in Paris.

the truth and allowing even non-educated people to understand God on a deep level:

> From frequent meditation one's heart is set on fire and animated to imitate and lay hold of these virtues. Then she is illuminated by divine virtue in such a way that she both clothes herself with virtue and distinguishes what is false from what is true: so much so that there have been many unlettered and simple persons who have come to know about the great and puzzling truths of God in this way.[46]

The devotional model of the 13th–15th centuries portrayed the spiritual practices of listening to or reading Scripture, meditation, and prayer (*lectio, meditatio, oratio*) as disciplines that contribute toward the higher goal of contemplation (*contemplatio*) of God in God's own essence and then, finally, union with God – either in a transient mystical state here on earth or everlastingly in the life to come. Thus, this passage from the *Meditations* continues: "You see then, to what an exalted height meditation on the life of Christ leads. Like a sturdy platform, it lifts one to greater heights of contemplation." In other words, formal education and even basic literacy were not required to reach the heights of union with God.

It's worth noting that the most popular devotional manual over these three centuries thus provides a model for human perfection that does

not require meeting the ideal of the educated male. It's further worth noting that it is hardly alone in this respect. As we'll see in the section *Mystics: Non-Standard Embodiment and Union with God*, female contemplatives frequently describe direct experiential contact with God as perfecting their intellects and making them figures worth listening to.[47] As with martyrs and mothers, what are typically portrayed as "defects" in body and mind ground the source of greater perfection.[48]

The *Meditation*'s focus on Christ's human experiences is part of a larger tradition: one that emphasizes respects in which Jesus suffers, bleeds, and dies like a mother – that is, for the sake of his children.[49] Figures as varied as the 12th century Benedictine Bernard of Clairvaux, the 13th century Carthusian Marguerite of Oingt, and the 14th century anchorite Julian of Norwich describe Christ's role as one of mothering. Bernard of Clairvaux's discussions of Christ as mother establish the groundwork for later medieval portrayals. He often calls for spiritual leaders to take Christ as their example in this respect as well, instructing his fellow abbots in one particularly memorable injunction in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs* to "Be mild, avoid ferocity, suspend the whip, bring forth your breasts; let them fatten with breastmilk, not swell with passion."[50]

In the late 13th century, Marguerite d'Oingt – an extremely rare example of a female Carthusian author – muses on God's role as mother in her *Pagina meditationum*:[51]

> Are you not my mother and more than mother? The mother who bore me labored at my birth for one day or one night, but you, my sweet and lovely Lord, were in pain for me not just one day, but you were in labor for more than thirty years. Oh, sweet and lovely Lord, how bitterly were you in labor for me all through your life! But when the time approached when you had to give birth, the labor was such that your holy sweat was like drops of blood which poured out of your body onto the ground.[52]

Christ's crucifixion is depicted here as the end of a labor that has been going on for his entire life, and his sweating and bleeding as experiences common to mothers. Marguerite emphasizes the extent of Christ's suffering by portraying him as a woman in labor who isn't even allowed to move around to relieve her discomfort, and who gives birth not just to one child but to the whole world:

> When the hour of birth came, you were placed on the hard bed of the cross where you could not move or turn around or stretch your limbs as someone who suffers much pain should be able to do …. And surely it was no wonder that your veins were broken when you gave birth to the world all in one day.[53]

Julian of Norwich's *Showings* famously also contains a lengthy discussion of Christ as Mother. She begins, like Marguerite, by comparing Christ's suffering on the cross with childbirth:

> In love, [our true Mother Jesus] labors to carry us inside himself, until we come to full term. Then he suffers the most painful blows and excruciating birth pangs that ever have been or ever shall be endured, only to die in the end.[54]

Christ's service as mother does not end with his death, however. Instead, Jesus is resurrected in order to feed us with his own body and blood in the Eucharist, as a mother feeds her child with her milk:

> And when he had finished dying, and birthed us into endless bliss, still all this could not satisfy his wondrous love …. And so now he must nourish us, which is what a mother does. The human mother can suckle the child with her milk, but our beloved Mother Jesus can feed us with himself. This is what he does when he tenderly and graciously offers us the blessed sacrament, which is the precious food of true life.[55]

The wound in Christ's side takes on special significance here, indicating how Christ can literally incorporate us into himself, going beyond what even a mother can do when she snuggles her child to herself: "The human mother can tenderly lay the child on her breast, but our tender Mother Jesus can lead us directly into his own tender breast through his sweet broken-open side."[56] This harks back to an earlier passage, in which Christ invites Julian and the rest of humanity to enter into him via this wound:

> Then, with a cheerful expression, our Beloved looked into his side and gazed into his wound with joy. With his sweet gazing he directed the mind of this creature to enter through that wound in his side. There he revealed to me a beautiful and delicious place, ample enough for all humanity to rest in peace and love. This made me think of his dear blood and the precious water that he allowed to be poured out for love.[57]

Julian's vivid imagery here is entirely in line with standard 13th–15th century representations of the broken, wounded Christ. Countless images of the crucifixion from this period depict blood pouring from Christ's side into a cup – blood which is then offered to his children in the Eucharist (see Figure 7.8).

Women's and mothers' bodies are not generally viewed today as disabled, and yet insurance companies often label pregnancy as a coverable

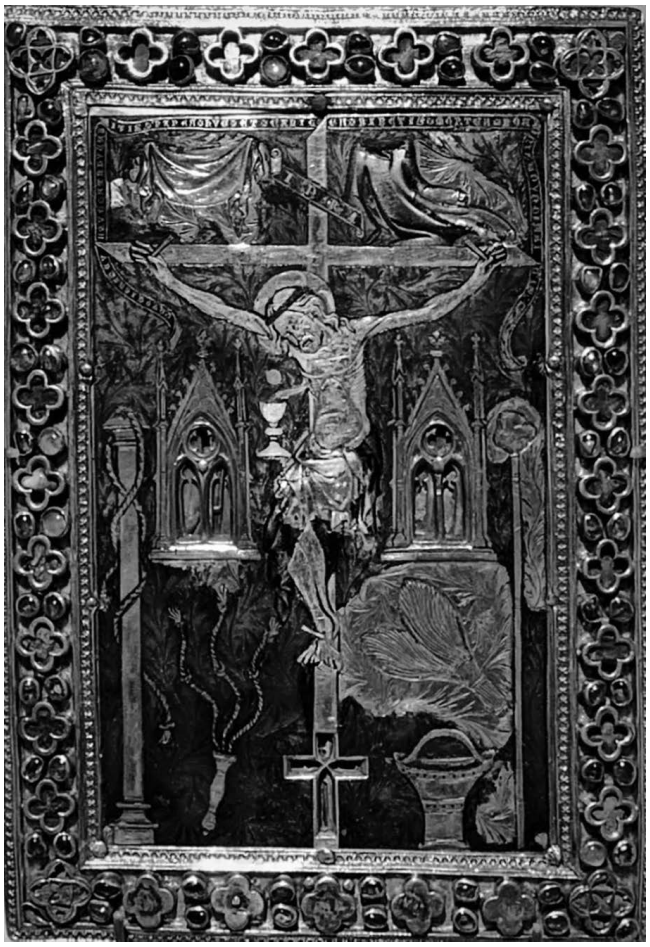

Figure 7.8 Framed reliquary, Crucifixion with Arma Christi, Paris (?), mid-14th c., Cluny Museum, Paris.

"illness" and birth a "short-term disability" – labels which continue to take able-bodied males as the norm. Furthermore, the conditions that the medieval figures discussed above – bleeding, suffering intense pain, having open wounds, and so on – are still seen as signs of infirmity and imperfection. Yet here they prove central to God's plan for human salvation. The incarnate Christ's experiences are shown as paralleling those of women and mothers in ways that present those forms of embodiment as legitimate in their own right, despite the fact that they fall short of what would typically be portrayed as the Aristotelian "ideal." In so doing, they present a model of "disabilities" that enhance rather than impair their bearer's ability to fulfill their final end.

Mystics: Non-Standard Embodiment and Union with God

This model – in which conditions typically assumed to impair a subject's ability to actualize their natural human capacities are instead experienced as enhancing that subject's connection to God – is also employed by many mystics in this period, including Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Margret Ebner, Birgitta of Sweden, Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Siena, and Julian of Norwich. As the sweating, bleeding, dying Christ becomes the paradigm of divinity in the 12th–13th centuries, religious sensibilities change, and there is a marked increase in reports of mystic experiences that involve suffering, illness, bleeding, tears, and even (temporary) death.[58] These mystics value such experiences insofar as they mirror Christ's Passion and serve as sources of immediate connection to God. Such experiences are also often described as conferring special spiritual gifts, no doubt because of their relation to the incarnate God's; medieval mystics thus weave their experiences of infirmity into a complex theology that challenges traditional models of human perfection and opens up new possibilities for a theology of disability.[59]

Before continuing, it is important to stress that I do not mean in any way to advocate a theology of disability that sees suffering as inherently valuable or as a necessary source of purification from sin. Such a view has often been pushed on marginalized people, particularly women, as a way of convincing them that patiently bearing with the horrible consequences of institutionalized injustice is a virtue and a way of getting closer to God. As Simone de Beauvoir comments in the *Second Sex*, religion has long been preached to women as a "mirage of transcendence" when actually it "confirms the social order, it justifies her resignation, by giving her the hope of a better future in a sexless heaven."[60] I offer what follows as another way (together with the case of martyrs and mothers) in which the dominant view of human nature that takes the able-bodied man as its standard is challenged in the 13th–15th centuries by people who were widely believed when they reported that they had experiences that perfected human nature while deviating in marked ways from that standard measure.

Marguerite d'Oingt, for instance, explains to her confessor why she has taken the unusual (for a Carthusian nun) step of writing down her revelations in terms of its being necessary to relieve suffering she was experiencing following an intense mystical experience. Describing herself in the third person, she reports, "When she came back to her senses, she had all these things written in her heart in such a way that she could think of nothing else, and her heart was so full that she could not eat, drink, or sleep until she was so weak that the doctors thought she was

on the point of death." As a result, she resolved to write down what she had experienced:

> She thought that if she put these things into writing in the same way that our Lord had put them into her heart, her heart would be unburdened. She began to write everything that is in this book, in the order that it was in her heart …. And when she had written everything down, she was all cured. I firmly believe that if she had not put all this down in writing, she would have died or gone mad, because for seven days she had neither slept nor eaten and she had never before done anything to get herself into such a state.[61]

In Marguerite's case, her suffering results from trying to keep God's revelation to her inside herself. More often, however, contemplatives depict intense suffering as preceding or accompanying visions, auditions, and/or other mystical experiences. Julian of Norwich, for instance, specifically asks God for an illness that will bring her near death; in her *Showings*, she reports that God grants her request: her vision of the bleeding Christ occurs as she believes she is dying and is instead brought back to full health.[62]

One of the most interesting cases in this respect comes from Margaret Ebner, an early 14th century Dominican nun at the Monastery of Maria Medingen near Dillingen (in Germany). In her *Revelations*, Ebner reports an experience that begins with great pain but leaves her with a gift of divine understanding:

> The next day I was very sick and began to wonder about what was happening to me. I perceived well what it was. It came from my heart and I feared for my senses now and then whenever it was so intense. But I was answered by the presence of God with sweet delight, "I am no robber of the senses, I am the enlightener of the senses." I received a great grace from the inner goodness of God; the light of truth of divine understanding. Also, my mind became more rational than before, so that I had the grace to be able to phrase all my speech better and also to understand better all speech according to the truth. Since then I am often talked about.[63]

In this context, when Ebner says that she is much talked about, she is not bragging about her new spiritual prowess – she is inviting the reader to verify what she is saying by asking around.

Medieval mystics often report receiving divine understanding directly, and in a way that provides a foretaste of what all human beings will experience in the life to come.[64] Insofar as the ultimate end of human nature is knowing and loving God, human beings can fulfil their potentialities in any way that does this. Moreover, as we saw in the sections *Christ and the*

Martyrs: Glorified "Defects" and Alternative Embodiment, and *Mothers: Bleeding, Leaking God-Bearers and Models of Christ's Humanity*, martyrs imitating Christ by retaining their wounds in the afterlife (without pain) and mothers' bodies mirroring Christ's body in their bleeding (and feeding) also present examples in which God is understood as able to glorify any sort of embodiment, whether standardly able-bodied or not.

One final feature that medieval representations of these three "disabled" groups share is being enclosed in community. Although I here lack the space to expand on this sufficiently, I close with Julian's injunction to avoid the sort of independent-minded self-sufficiency that so often isolate the human beings who do meet the measure of the "natural" and the "normal":

> God would like for us to cultivate our faith through spiritual community and seek our beloved Mother in the solace of true understanding, among the communion of the blessed. For although a single person might often break himself, the whole body of spiritual community can never be broken. And so it is a sure thing – a good and gracious thing – to humbly and powerfully bind ourselves to our Mother, to Holy Church, and to Christ.[65]

Notes

1 I would like to thank Elizabeth Barnes, Kevin Timpe, and Scott Williams for valuable discussion on this topic; a grant from the Calvin Alumni Association Fund made much of the research for this chapter possible, particularly by supporting travel to various museums.

2 Contemporary work in the philosophy of disability and disability studies offers a variety of working definitions, often motivated by broader ideology and/or context-sensitive. For an overview of influential definitions and the larger frameworks in which they function, see Elizabeth Barnes's *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*, particularly Chapter 1, "Constructing Disability."

3 Douglas Baynton "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," 33–57.

4 See Sister Prudence Allen's three-volume work *The Concept of Woman*, particularly volumes one and two, respectively subtitled *The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC–AD 1250* and *The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500*, for an extensive discussion and an exhaustive list of authors and texts that discuss this "natural order," in particular as it pertains to men and women. Both biological and theological arguments were leveled in favor of this order, which evolves into the Great Chain of Being by the time of Lovejoy.

5 Again, for extensive references, see Sister Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*. Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas all agree on this score.

6 The term is recorded in the court records of Porete's trial by the Continuer of William of Nangis.

7 Caliban from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a well-known example of this trope.

8 For a more detailed discussion of this notion of perfection, including both its relation to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and its application in Thomas Aquinas, see the "metaphysical foundations" chapters in Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey, and Christina VanDyke *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context*.

9 A talking cow, for instance, would have been considered defective and a monster, even if a particularly interesting one, as opposed to an advance in or outlier of the species.

10 See Robert Pasnau's *Metaphysical Themes 1274–1671* for a detailed (if controversial) discussion on this shift.

11 For a detailed discussion of the social consequences of this movement, particularly with respect to its effects on punishment and "corrective" treatment of populations, see Michele Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, particularly Part Three: Discipline.

12 For this reason, religious and social movements of the time (including Margaret Sanger's Planned Parenthood) often involved eugenics in their missions. For a detailed and distressing history of this connection, see Christine Rosen's *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement*.

13 Again, see Elizabeth Barnes *The Minority Body*, Chapter 1, especially 38, 46, and 50, in which she canvasses a number of different current definitions of disability; Barnes argues for what she calls a "moderate social constructionism," on which disability involves someone in a bodily state x such that "the rules for making judgments about solidarity employed by the disability rights movement classify x in context C as among the physical conditions that they are seeking to promote justice for." Barnes argues that this concept of disability "travels" and can be retroactively applied to cases in, say, the Middle Ages and before.

14 Monsters functioned in a variety of ways in medieval society and included virtually everything and everyone portrayed as outside the typical natural and social order, such as dragons, sirens, demons, saints, and martyrs. See Sherry Lindquist and Asa Mittman's *Medieval Monsters: Terrors, Aliens, Wonders* and David Williams's *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature*.

15 See the Introduction to Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight*: *Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* for a discussion of both the philosophical history of these characteristics' association with Western European men and the consequences of this construction for contemporary culture. Carol Cohn's "Wars, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War," also provides an excellent discussion of this topic.

16 See the section, *Mothers: Bleeding, Leaking God-Bearers and Models of Christ's Humanity*, for a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon.

17 Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," 35.

18 This shift in devotional piety has been the subject of much scholarship and is often associated with a move towards a distinctively 'feminine' piety. The locus classicus of this view is Herbert Grundmann's 1935 German monograph, translated into English as *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*; the view was popularized by Caroline Walker Bynum's work in the 1980s and 90s (see particularly the essays in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*). Recent scholarship has challenged the notion

that the affective piety focused on Christ's humanity and suffering should be viewed as particularly feminine or even as an invention of the 12th and later centuries: see, e.g., Lauren Mancia's *Emotional Monasticism: Affective Piety in the Eleventh-Century Monastery of John of Fécamp*. Regardless, the emphasis on Christ's humanity over his divinity is marked and has a profound impact on religious and aesthetic sensibilities for much of the later Middle Ages.

19 Catherine of Siena *The Dialogue*, 26, 65.
20 See particularly Thomas Aquinas, ST IIIa, 1.
21 Ibid., ST IIIa 14, 4, obj. 1.
22 Ibid., obj. 2.
23 See particularly ibid., ST IIIa 14, 4, co. and ad 2.
24 Augustine's *City of God* determines the shape of the debate over the features of Christ's resurrection and the general resurrection of the dead throughout the Middle Ages.
25 For further discussion of these features and their role in the Beatific Vision, see Christina Van Dyke "Aquinas's Shiny Happy People: Perfect Happiness and the Limits of Human Nature," 269–291.
26 These reasons for Christ's retaining his scars are that they are signs of Christ's triumph over death, to convince the disciples of the truth of the resurrection, to show God when Christ intercedes for us, solidarity with the martyrs, and to rebuke the unrepentant.
27 Thomas Aquinas, ST, IIIa 54, 4, ad 2.
28 Mechthild of Magdeburg *Flowing Light of the Godhead* IV, 14.
29 Thomas Aquinas, ST IIIa 54, 4, co. I've here omitted "*quamvis in corpore, non corporis*" from the final clause for clarity: literally this translates as "although in the body, not of the body" – the idea seems to be that the wounds of the martyrs appear in their bodies but are not caused by physical conditions, and thus it's appropriate for them to remain because they weren't caused by sin.
30 It's worth noting that the Roman Catholic patron saint of the disabled comes from just the time and place I'm focusing on: Margaret of Citta di Castello (1287-12 April 1320) had severe spinal curvature and was barely four feet tall; according to some stories, she was also blind. Yet she became a Dominican tertiary in 1303 and is remembered for her service to her community, including teaching at a small school. In other words, her physical conditions are an important part of her story, but what she is primarily remembered for is service to her community.
31 Sculptures of Bartholomew holding his own skin become popular in the Renaissance and are often clearly meant to display both the artistic prowess and advanced anatomical knowledge of the artist. Probably the most famous of these is the statue in the south transept of the Milan Duomo, carved in 1562 by Marco d'Agrate.
32 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, ST, IIIa 54, 5, on whether Christ experienced pain, particularly the response to the third objection.
33 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, ST IaIIae 4, 6.
34 For discussions of such representations and how they fit into the general ideology of their age, see, Caroline Walker Bynum *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 151–179, and Barbara Newman's *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*.
35 Thomas Aquinas's discussion of these topics in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (ST Ia 75–89) presents a very standard account of this view.
36 See Thomas Aquinas, ST Ia 92, for a question-long discussion of the nature of women and women's bodies.

37 This difference causes John Duns Scotus to side with Galen versus Aristotle. Scotus is deeply devoted to the Virgin Mother, and he believes that for her to serve as a true mother to God, she must have played a somewhat active rather than merely passive physical role. Scotus thus places a great deal of emphasis on the sense in which women are secondary active causes of their children. See Marilyn McCord Adams's "Duns Scotus on the Female Gender," 255–270.

38 See, e.g., Aquinas's ST Ia 92.1, particularly the body of the article and the response to the second objection. Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, published in 1405, is a systematic response to these sorts of arguments.

39 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, ScG IV, 88.

40 The blood that men shed is the exception rather than, say, the menstrual rule; men's seminal contribution to reproduction was also portrayed as an active, intentional emission rather than a passive leaking.

41 Women were said to be of a more watery (and cold) constitution and thus able to form images more easily than men – but then also retain them less perfectly. For these general physiological principles, see Thomas Aquinas, ST Ia 78, 4, co.

42 Its enduring popularity is attested to by the survival of over 200 manuscript copies, as is the fact that it was a subject of early printing editions.

43 Its influence on scholastic works has long been overlooked, in part because very few people actually read the *Meditations* today. The number of extant manuscripts made compiling a definitive Latin edition daunting, and the work itself is long, disjointed (the text goes back and forth between vignettes in the life of Christ and sermons by Bernard of Clairvaux), and rather tedious. The first definitive Latin edition of the *Meditations* was produced only in 1997, by Mary Stallings-Taney (*Meditationes Vitae Christi*).

44 The marked contrast between these highly engaging scenes and the interpolation of lengthy passages from Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons has led Sarah McNamer to argue that the longer Latin text is a later version of a much shorter one written by an Italian Franciscan nun in the mid-1300s, most notably in "The Origins of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*," 905–955. See her *Meditations on the Life of Christ: The Short Italian Text* for a translation and commentary of the Italian text she has reconstructed. McNamer's work has been the subject of intense criticism by her contemporaries in medieval history; Michelle Karnes, for instance, has been quite vocal in arguing in favor of the longer Latin text as the original. See "Exercising the Imagination: The Meditationes vitae Christi and Stimulus amoris" in her *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages*.

45 The pictures from a wonderfully illustrated Italian manuscript of the first two thirds of the text are well worth a look; they are published, along with an English translation of the extant manuscript, in *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*.

46 The text here continues to reference the life of Francis of Assisi: "How do you think blessed Francis arrived at so great an abundance of virtues and so lucid an understanding of the Scriptures? … He was so ardently drawn toward that life that his own life became a mirror resemblance of Christ's life." Prologue to the *Meditations*, 3. Here and elsewhere I follow Stallings-Taney's Latin edition, translated as *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.

47 For an extended discussion of this topic, see Christina Van Dyke "The Will and Love" in my forthcoming *A Hidden Wisdom: Self-Knowledge, Reason, Love, Persons, and Immortality in Medieval Contemplatives*.

48 A number of feminist scholars have argued that these exceptions actually uphold rather than subvert patriarchal norms. See, e.g., Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* and Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sexism and God-talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*.
49 Caroline Walker Bynum's groundbreaking and exhaustive study of this topic remains a classic: "Jesus as Mother" in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*.
50 Bernard of Clairvaux *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, 23.2. For an extensive discussion of Bernard's views on the topic, see Walker Bynum's 1977 "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing," 257–284, which forms the basis for her 1982 study.
51 The *Pagina* is written in Latin, although we have other works of Marguerite d'Oingt in which she writes in Franco-Provençal.
52 Margaret of Oingt *The Writings of Margaret of Oingt, Medieval Prioress and Mystic (d. 1310)*, 31.
53 Ibid., 31.
54 Julian of Norwich *The Showings of Julian of Norwich: A New Translation*, 165–166.
55 Ibid., 166. For a discussion of the respects in which Christ's blood is taken to resemble breastmilk (and vice versa), see Elizabeth Robertson's "Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*,"142–167.
56 Julian of Norwich *The Showings of Julian of Norwich: A New Translation*, 166.
57 Ibid., 59.
58 See, e.g., the so-called "Sister Catherine Treatise" for an influential description of mystical death and its consequences; Catherine of Siena is also described by her confessor, Raymond of Capua, as having suffered a mystic death.
59 See Grace Jantzen's *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* for one of the most influential modern discussions of this topic.
60 Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, 624.
61 Marguerite d'Oingt *Letters*, 64–65.
62 For a discussion of this request and its significance in its own time, see Elizabeth Robertson "Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich's *Showings*."
63 Margaret Ebner *Major Works*, 100.
64 See, for instance, Angela of Foligno *Memorial*, Book IX.
65 Julian of Norwich *The Showings of Julian of Norwich: A New Translation*, 168.

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