



**Love in the Time of Demons: Thirteenth-Century Approaches to the Capacity for Love in Fallen Angels**  
**O amor em tempos demoníacos: diferentes abordagens no século XIII para a capacidade de amar dos anjos caídos**

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**Resumo:** Os demônios da Idade Média foram conhecidos, principalmente como criaturas que podiam sentir somente inveja, raiva e alegria maliciosa. Mas ainda havia uma tendência no pensamento escolástico e nos contos monásticos que também entendiam demônios como criaturas uma vez capazes – e talvez, somente uma vez-, de amor. Este artigo analisa a capacidade de amor e amizade atribuída a demônios no século XIII. Ele mostra como o amor pode ser visto como a emoção motivadora em sua queda original do Céu, e explora o papel do amor posteriormente pensado para ter jogado tanto em suas relações uns com os outros e as suas relações amorosa e sexual com os humanos.

**Abstract:** Demons in the Middle Ages were primarily known as creatures that could feel only envy, anger, and malicious glee. But there remained an undercurrent in both scholastic thought and monastic tales that also understood demons as creatures once capable—and perhaps still so—of love. This paper examines the capacity for love and friendship attributed to demons in the thirteenth century. It shows how love could be seen as the motivating emotion in their original fall from Heaven, and explores the role love is subsequently thought to have played in both their relationships with each other and their amatory and sexual relationships with humans.

**Palavras-chave:** Demônios – Amor natural – Livre-arbítrio – Amizade – Lascívia.

**Keywords:** Demons – Natural love – Free will – Friendship – Lust.

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MALLORQUÍ-RUSCALLEDA, Enric (coord.). *Mirabilia 15* (2012/2)  
As Emoções no Mediterrâneo Antigo e do início da era moderna  
Las emociones en el Mediterráneo antiguo y en el inicio de la era moderna  
Emotions in Pre- & Early Modern Mediterranean

Jun-Dez 2012/ISSN 1676-5818

Recebido em 26.09.2012

Aceito em 15.10.2012

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Devils that glare at passers-by from church facades or leer maliciously at unfortunate sinners in medieval artworks and manuscript illuminations constitute the familiar faces of medieval demons. From the miracle tales of medieval monastic culture to high medieval scholastic explorations of the nature of the supernatural world and its inhabitants, demons are overwhelmingly characterized as irascible and malevolent beings, fuelled solely by envy, wrath, and hatred. Yet there remains a line of thought—albeit tenuous—running through these genres that remembers demons otherwise: as beings possessed of both a facility and a desire for that finest of emotions, love. This article explores the capacity for love attributed by thirteenth-century writers to demons in the time before their fall from Heaven, while they were still angels, following their fall as a cohort united in a single aim of persecution and misery, and in their troubled relations with humans.

Thinkers in the twelfth century had explored the boundlessness of love that existed between God and the human soul in the dawning of mystic theology, the nature of desire in the flowering of both hetero- and homosexual erotic Latin verse, and the power of friendship (*amicitia*) between men (and even, in Heloise's case, between men and women), particularly within monastic contexts. Yet when it comes to conceptualizing demonic love in the thirteenth century, these ideas take a darker turn, and thinkers find the obverse to the unbounded, ineffable, invigorating love of the twelfth century.

Instead they lay bare a world in which *amicitia* can exceed its limits and efface the love that should exist between God and his creation, and where love might exist only in stunted, contingent, and defective form, misdirected in its object of affection. At the same time, they offer a tantalizing alternative glimpse of what might constitute the demonic, evoking demons who once loved wholly and powerfully, who still retain the faintest spark of a love now forever remote from them, and who are capable of being—though wrongly and possessively—in love with humans.



## I. Why did the demons fall?

What had prompted the angels, God's highest and finest creation, to turn against him was a question that absorbed Christian thinkers throughout the Middle Ages. Pride was the traditional answer: a passage from Isaiah showed that the pre-eminent angel Satan (also known as Lucifer) had, at some point following the moment of his creation, dared to covet equality with the Lord, and had been flung headlong from Heaven for his presumption.<sup>2</sup> But this solution raised its own difficulties: if the angels had been created good—which had to be the case, since God could not create evil—how had such overweening pride been engendered in the first angel? Because of the inherent goodness of God's creation, the source of Satan's pride had to be traced to something that was, in its essence, wholly and necessarily good. For some high medieval thinkers, the answer could only be found in the concept of love.

The matter is carefully defined by Vincent of Beauvais in Book I, C. XXXI, of his *Speculum naturale* where he deals with the created nature of angels and the complex relationship between love and free will in guiding their actions. Angels, he says, have a natural love ('naturalem dilectionem') by which they are able to love both themselves and God. But this natural love is twofold, consisting of voluntary and involuntary components. Involuntary love is not subject to free will and, as no action of choice is implicated in it, it is morally neutral.

Voluntary love, however, is subject to free will, and is divisible into two: friendship (*amicitia*), by which we love something for itself, and desire (*concupiscentia*), by which we love something insofar as it is good, useful, or pleasurable to us. In their original state, Vincent contends, the angels loved God naturally. But there was an angel which did not have true charity because it did not love God for God's sake, but rather for its own sake, delighting in itself above all things and wrenching proper love from its true source to its

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 14. 12-15: 'quomodo cecidisti de caelo lucifer qui mane oriebaris...qui dicebas in corde tuo in caelum conscendam super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum...ascendam super altitudinem nubium ero similis Altissimo...verumtamen ad infernum detraheris in profundum lacu' (How have you fallen from Heaven, Lucifer, you who rose in the morning...you who said in your heart 'I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will climb above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'...but you are dragged down into the depths of the abyss).



own good. This angel thus loved God by the love of desire for what was useful to it, but loved itself by the love of friendship, seeking its own good above all else.<sup>3</sup>

This picture is complicated by the thirteenth-century Franciscan scholar Peter John (or, 'of John') Olivi in Quaestio XLIII of his *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum* (Questions on the Second Book of the *Sentences*). Olivi agrees that the turn towards sin in the first angel must be located initially in the affect of love. Because love is the root of all emotions, so the first defect of sin must spring from a love of self that has tended towards evil, rather than from any other appetite or desire that proceeds secondarily from such vitiated self-love (such as pride, presumption, or ambition).<sup>4</sup> From this ill-tending love, which is not focused on God, but remains fixed on the self and subject to no other's will, arises presumption (which Olivi describes as a 'sensus et affectio') which ranges without limit or measure.

This vitiated and immoderate love seeks out the power it judges, in its blind presumption, to be suitable to itself—and so ambition is naturally born out of (self)-love.<sup>5</sup> From this genealogy of the passion of ambition, however, Olivi's analysis takes a fascinating turn, as he widens his scope to view the first

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<sup>3</sup> VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS. *Speculum naturale*. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964. Facsimile edition of Dvaci, ex officina typographica Baltazaris Belleri, 1624, Bk I, C. XXXI, col. 41: 'Sed diligebat Angelus Deum super omnia amore concupiscentiae, scilicet in ipso delectando super omnia. Nec tamen sequitur, quod haberet charitatem, quia non diligebat Deum propter ipsum Deum, sed propter se, scilicet retorquendo ipsam dilectionem ad commodum proprium, hoc est, non quia bonus erat, sed quia sibi utilis erat.... Amore autem amicitiae diligebat seipsum super omnia, scilicet volens sibi bonum super omnia.'

<sup>4</sup> FR. PETRUS IOHANNIS OLIVI, OFM. *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*. Edited by Bernard Jansen. 3 vols. Quaracchi: Ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1922, Vol. 1, p. 718: 'sciendum quod sicut amor est radix omnium affectionum, sic amor sui est radix omnium affectionum non virtualium; et ideo oportet quod primus defectus peccati inchoetur in vitioso sui amore potius quam in appetitu seu desiderio procedente ab ipso'.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 719: 'Et habet plenum praedominium, quia nulli est alteri voluntati subiectus nec subici valens...Et ideo naturali ordine sibi mox ingignitur sensus et affectio praesumptionis...Quia vero vitiosus et praesumptiosus sui amor fertur sine regula et mensura ad fines suos; idcirco honorem et potestatem et reliqua sibi propter se appetibilia, quantum est ex se, appetit infinite, et praecipue si secundum suam caecam praesumptionem aestimet se aptum ad illa. Et ideo ambitio est naturaliter connexa praefato amori.'



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angel's sin as one not deriving solely from himself, but also implicating the entire angelic community. Olivi suggests that the first angel was drawn to self-love because

he saw himself reflected within each heart as if he were the singular and universal head of all, and seeing his power in each of them, he saw himself multiplied and magnified, just like a man who sees himself reflected in many mirrors at the same time.<sup>6</sup>

In effect, then, the first angel's turn towards a disordered love began both in the angelic community's love of him, which was a form of good to him (and hence an aspect of the love-form of desire), and in the love-form of friendship, by which he loved himself as much in himself as in others.<sup>7</sup>

But while it might be possible to make a case for one angel—especially the pre-eminent angel—falling through an inordinate love of self that led to overweening pride and ambition, could this same motive be applied to all the angels that fell? Surely the angels of the lower orders could not have been operating under the same desire for equality with God that apparently overtook Satan? As Jean de Paris observes in this context, a pauper does not immediately seek to be a king, but more modestly desires some status simply a little higher than his own. Just so, the angels of the lower orders could not have been seeking equality with God, as Satan was, when they rebelled.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 719: 'Et ideo primus angelus facilius fuit ad se ipsum amandum in tota universitate angelorum et omnium creatorum sibi subiecta quam sumendo se sine illis, et praecipue quia in quolibet illorum sentiebat se quasi duplicari; videndo enim se esse in corde uniuscuiusque tanquam singulare et universale caput omnium et videndo potestatem suam super unumquemque, sic videbat se multiplicatum et magnificatum, sicut homo qui videt se simul in multis speculis.'

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 720: 'Quia vero tota universitas ut ab eo dilecta sibi et propter se ipsum habuit rationem boni concupiscibilis tanquam obiectum amoris concupiscentiae: idcirco inchoatio deordinationis amoris videtur potuisse inchoari aut in praefato amore concupiscentiae aut in amore amicitiae quo se ipsum tam in se quam in omnibus amabat.'

<sup>8</sup> JEAN DE PARIS (QUIDORT). *Commentaire sur les Sentences: Reportation*. Edited by Jean-Pierre Muller. 2 vols. Rome: Herder, 1961-64, Vol. 2 (1964), D. VI, Q. 6, p. 91: '...quia angelus appetit aequalitatem Dei. Sed si fuisset de inferiori ordine, istud non ita cito appetivisset, sed prius aliquid intermedium. Sicut pauper homo non immediate appetit se esse regem, sed aliquid medium inter ipsum et regem.'



In his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas suggests that Satan induced the other angels to fall, not by compelling them, but through a kind of exhortation, although he does not specify what form this might have taken.<sup>9</sup> Yet even if angels, as purely intellectual beings, could instantly have perceived and consented to Satan at the moment that he expressed (through whatever kind of angelic communication system) his intention, as Aquinas avers,<sup>10</sup> this still leaves open the question of *why* they did so: what would have induced the angels to band together with each other under the leadership of one of their own against their Lord and Creator? And if pride were the motivating factor amongst all the angels, why should angels who balked at being under the yoke of God have then been happy to subject themselves to one who was far inferior to him, and in fact created by him?

The scene has already been set by Olivi for the (perhaps surprising) answer: the lesser rebellious angels were swayed by the emotion of love. In Heaven, Olivi suggests, the angels visibly enjoyed each others' company, and, in comparison with each other, God was to them both unseen and absent. Because feelings will always be more easily and more powerfully swayed by the visible experience of a beloved good than by a good that might be greater, but which is far absent and not visibly experienced, so the angels were more attuned to their own company than to God's.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as a community, the angels were almost like one body, the lesser angels being linked to the first angel like limbs connected to a head, and they saw themselves in the first angel just as sons do in their father's heart.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter ST). In *Corpus Thomisticum*. Edited by Enrique Alarcón. <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>. Pars 1, Q. 63, a. 8, co: 'Respondeo dicendum quod peccatum primi Angeli fuit aliis causa peccandi, non quidem cogens, sed quadam quasi exhortatione inducens.'

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, Q. 63, a. 8, ad 1: 'in eodem instanti in quo primus Angelus suam affectionem intelligibili locutione expressit, possibile fuit aliis in eam consentire.'

<sup>11</sup> *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, ed. Jansen, 1. 717: 'licet ipsi cognoscerent Deum, non tamen ipsum visibiliter videbant, sicut se ipsos, nec fruebantur eius visibili societate, sicut sua societate visibiliter fruebantur. Unde eorum intellectus ferebatur in Deum ut absentem, quamquam longe altiori modo ferrentur in Deum quam nos. Inter cetera autem ad quae facillime et vehementissime movetur affectus est visibilis experientia boni amati, quamquam sit secundum se longe minus quam sit aliud bonum absens et visibiliter inexpertum.'

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 720: 'sic erant ei connexi sicut membra suo capiti et sic videbant se esse in illo sicut filios in corde patris.'



In a telling metaphor that raises and twists the question of temptation and fall, Olivi posits that the company of the first angel was as beloved and delightful to the lesser angels as the company of Eve was to Adam.<sup>13</sup> And so the lesser angels sinned by loving the first angel for himself beyond due measure, and for loving themselves in him and in relation to him. They were proud through his pride and gloried in his glory as though it were their own, since it was as if, through the bond of love, together they formed one body.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it became completely contrary to both their natural bond and their will that they should be separated from him and his friendship<sup>15</sup>—and so they fell with him.

Permeating Olivi's arguments here is a fundamental suspicion of experiential knowledge. The angels in Heaven wrongfully enjoy each other's society to excess because they have visible experience ('visibilis experientia') of it; by the same token they do not value as greatly as they should God's presence because it is a good not visibly experienced ('visibiliter inexpertum'). That God's presence can be so devalued by an experiential outlook fundamentally highlights the epistemological deficiencies of experience. This same distrust also manifests itself in Olivi's treatise on the pagan philosophers, *De perlegendis philosophorum libris*, where Olivi critiques the experiential form of knowledge employed by the pagan philosophers, always reasserting the absolute primacy of spiritual knowledge and faith.<sup>16</sup>

Thus he comments that it is the nature of children to rely on sense perception alone, whereas God teaches through the principles of faith, which are above

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 720: 'si societas Evae fuit Adae amabilis et desiderabilis: non mirum, si societas primi angeli fuit angelis inferioribus amabilis et delectabilis.'

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 721: 'ipsi vero ponuntur consequenter peccasse, illum sibi indebite amando et se ipsos in illo seu in relatione ad illum et in complacentiis et desideriiis ac praesumptionibus et confidentiis tali amori annexis. Et attende quod ea ratione qua per nexum amoris erant unum illi in illius gloria quasi in sua superbiebant et gloriabantur et etiam in gloria omnium consociorum, quia totum erat unum corpus ex capite et membris compactum.'

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 720: 'ideo sequestrari ab illo et ab amicitia illius secundum se et absolute erat contrariissimum naturali nexui et voluntati eorum. Pro quanto autem erat eis visibilior quam Deus, pro tanto potuerunt faciliter ferri in illum absque relatione in Deum.'

<sup>16</sup> FR. PETRUS IOHANNIS OLIVI. *De perlegendis philosophorum libris*. In Ferdinand Delorme, 'Fr. Petri Joannis Olivi tractatus "De perlegendis Philosophorum libris"', *Antonianum*, 16 (1941), 31-44, p. 38: 'Principia enim veritatis spiritualissima sunt et abstractissima, quae animalis homo non potuit percipere, quia eorum examinatio seu experientia non est sensualis, sed potius spiritualis.'



sense perception.<sup>17</sup> The potentially rebellious angels in heaven, with their reliance on knowledge and affinity through contiguity, and their consequent lack of appreciation of God as remote, thus function as forerunners of the pagan philosophers who will be similarly misled by trusting experiential knowledge ahead of divinely received knowledge.

Trusting in the teaching of experience rather than in faith, both demons and pagan philosophers become proud and presumptuous,<sup>18</sup> and therefore err. Olivi thus powerfully constructs love as a passion—one that is almost viral in its operation—that swept through the angelic community in Heaven, precipitating the birth of pride and ambition in the first angel and contributing to the rebellion and fall of the others.

## II. Are demons capable of love in their fallen state?

If demons loved themselves and each other when they were splendid angels in Heaven, does that mutual love still pertain now that they have fallen from glory? Considering this question, Vincent of Beauvais calls again upon the distinction he had outlined earlier between love as a natural inherent emotion and love as a result of a free will choice. The demons, he asserts, have been created so that they naturally bear the capacity for love, but this love is morally indifferent because it is necessitated: ‘For whether it wants to or not, every demon loves itself, and God. And for that reason in these impulses there is neither merit nor demerit, because they are wholly natural’.<sup>19</sup>

When it comes to their own will, however, demons choose the opposite of love: ‘But by their rational will, which is free, they hate God. And they wish that he would not exist, if that could be.... They also hate every created being except themselves.’<sup>20</sup> So perverse has their relationship to other beings

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39: ‘Pueri enim sunt, qui solis sensibus vacant....Hanc autem stultitiam virga crucis fugat docens nos sumere principia fidei, quae sunt supra sensum.’

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41: ‘attende quod ipsi tradiderunt vane, tum quia cum ausu temerario et praesumptuoso, absque scilicet ducatu debito supremi magistri, tum quia cum modo curioso et fatuoso, quia scilicet non aspexerunt simplicitatem divini eloquii...’

<sup>19</sup> VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS. *Speculum naturale*. Bk II, Cap. CXXIX, col. 158: ‘Nam velit nolit, quilibet dæmon diligit se, & Deum. Et ideo in his motibus non est meritum, neque demeritum, quia pure naturales sunt.’

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 158: ‘Voluntati autem rationali, quæ est libera, habent odio Deum. Et vellent eum non esse, si fieri posset.... Habent etiam odio omnem creaturam præter se.’



become that they are held in a tension between loathing the existence of other creatures while desiring it for their own evil ends:

And every demon regarding another wishes simply that it did not exist, just the same as all other created beings. And yet in a certain way it wants that being to exist, namely so that it can harm it. For they applaud one another and delight together in their capacity to do harm: but each one hates each creature in so far as it is a created being, just as they also hate the Creator.<sup>21</sup>

Yet even with all this capacity for hatred, Vincent contends, they are not able to extinguish in themselves that fundamental natural love that promotes self-interest and preservation: 'For in no way is the natural affection in them able to be corrupted to this extent, that they should hate themselves, since their nature itself cannot support this, because it is necessarily a friend to itself and seeks its own good.'<sup>22</sup> This is a position that meshes with Aquinas's discussion of love and hate as passions of the soul, in which Aquinas makes it clear that it is impossible for anyone to hate himself, properly speaking.<sup>23</sup>

Vincent concludes his discussion by positing another fine distinction, the subtlety of which is expressed in his opposition of the terms 'effectum' (action, effect) and 'affectum' (natural love), as he declares that although 'the devil hates himself through deed ('per effectum'), namely through having corrupted himself through sin, yet he loves himself through natural feeling ('per affectum')'.<sup>24</sup> With good reason, then, does the 1624 edition of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 158: 'Et quilibet dæmon de alio simpliciter vellet eum non esse, sicut & alias creaturas. Et tamen quodammodo vult eam esse, scilicet vt noceat. Ex hoc enim quod nocent applaudunt sibi inuicem, & congaudent: sed quilibet odit omnem creaturam in quantum est creatura, sicut & creatorem.'

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 158: 'Nam nullo modo potest in eo adeo corrumpi naturalis affectio, vt odiat se, quia hoc ipsa natura non patitur, quia de necessitate sibi est amica, & appetit commodum suum.'

<sup>23</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS. ST, IaIIae, Q. 29, a. 4 co: 'Respondeo dicendum quod impossibile est quod aliquis, per se loquendo, odiat seipsum. Naturaliter enim unumquodque appetit bonum, nec potest aliquis aliquid sibi appetere nisi sub ratione boni.... Amare autem aliquem est velle ei bonum, ut supra dictum est. Unde necesse est quod aliquis amet seipsum; et impossibile est quod aliquis odiat seipsum, per se loquendo.' See also the discussion in MINER, Robert. *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 146-147.

<sup>24</sup> VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS. *Speculum naturale*, col. 158: 'Sic ergo diabolus odit quidem se per effectum, scilicet se corrumpendo per peccatum, tamen diligit se per affectum.'



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*Speculum* offer as a summary of this chapter the marginal gloss: ‘A demon loves and hates itself’ (‘Dæmon sese diligit & odit’).

Scholastics had dealt with the issue of order and hierarchy amongst demons, coming to the conclusion that following their fall, demons existed within ranks of superior and inferior beings who respectively gave and took orders.<sup>25</sup> This raised the question of how such proud and envious creatures as demons might be able to work together towards the common goal of perverting humanity without erupting into internecine strife and discord.

William of Auvergne transforms this apparently simple question into a searching analysis of the emotions and motives of demons in their fallen state. Turning the question this way and that, William raises then negates possible explanations for demonic behaviour, tellingly evoking human precedents and parallels to give insight into demons’ actions, and in the process powerfully anthropomorphizing these spiritual creatures.

William notes that demons are constrained by God to obey their master, so it should not be concluded from their lack of rebellion against him that they necessarily exist in happy accord with each other. Nothing should lead one to posit that patience, humility, peace, or love exist amongst them, since they are able to obey their master and make war against humanity without them.<sup>26</sup> They act solely out of hatred and wrath towards both God and humanity and this alone is the feeling (‘affectio’) by which they are animated.<sup>27</sup> As to the

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<sup>25</sup> See for instance PETER LOMBARD. *Sentences*. In *Sententiarum Liber Secundus*. The Franciscan Archive. <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/lombardus/II-Sent.html>. Bk II, D. VI, c. 4; THOMAS AQUINAS. ST, 1, Q. 109, arts 1 and 2; BONAVENTURE, *Commentary on Sentences*. In *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum*. The Franciscan Archive. <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/bonaventura/sent.html>. Bk II, D. VI, art. 3, qs 1 and 2.

<sup>26</sup> WILLIAM OF AUVERGNE. *De universo*. In Guilielmi Alverni Episcopi Parisiensis, *Opera Omnia*. 2 vols. Frankfurt-am-Main: Minerva, 1963. Facsimile edn of Aureliae, ex typographia F. Hotot, 1674. Vol. I. III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045aB: ‘Et ex eadem causa contra eundem rebellare nolunt, etiamsi possent, non possunt autem, cogente eos creatoris justitia, & ligante, ne contra principem aliquid possint. Manifestum igitur est, quia non cogere per ea, quæ præcesserunt, concedere, vel confiteri patientiam, vel humilitatem, apud eos esse, vel in ipsis; similiter neque pacem, aut amorem; cùm præter istas virtutes, & sine illis, & obedire principi suo, & impugnationem nostram possint.’

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045aB: ‘Ex his igitur advertere potes, ex qua affectio, vel intentione nequissimo principi suo obedient, videlicet in odium creatoris, & hominum.’



question whether there can be love or peace between them, William concedes, as Vincent of Beauvais above, that there was at one time a certain natural love amongst them.<sup>28</sup> Now, however, it has been utterly blocked and extinguished by ‘wrath, hatred, pride, envy, and other extremely poisonous passions of this sort’, just as often happens amongst humans.<sup>29</sup> Compassion is totally foreign to them since ‘the vehemence of the wickedness of these sorts of spirits does not permit them to wish for good, or to desire it for one another, or even to contemplate it’, and totally annihilates whatever capacity for good affections they might have had.<sup>30</sup>

Fundamentally, since they lack proper fear of God, demons will always lack love.<sup>31</sup> It might be the case that in some way they still bear their original capacity for love in attenuated root form; this has been so damaged and stunted, however, that it cannot ever bear the expected fruit of love.<sup>32</sup> Finally, William posits the ultimate objection to demons’ capacity to love each other: ‘If the immense and unimaginable goodness of the Creator does not move them, or arouse in them the affection of natural love at least, how could what are infinitely lesser creatures be sufficient to arouse the feeling of either natural or dutiful love in them?’<sup>33</sup>

William’s is clearly a scholastic approach to the capacity for love in demons that interrogates the question from multiple angles, offering hypotheses and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045aC: ‘Quòd si quis quærat an amor, & pax, sit apud eos, vel inter eos, naturaliter quippe se invicem dilexerunt.’

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045aC: ‘qualiter igitur naturalis dilectio, & quam ob causam extincta est in ipsis...Dico, quia quemadmodum videtur in hominibus, iram, & odium, superbiam, invidiam, & alias hujusmodi pestilentissimas passiones, naturalem dilectionem, adeò impedire, & quasi suffocare.’

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045aD: ‘vehementia malignitatis hujusmodi spirituum non permittit eos bonum velle, vel desiderare in alterutrum, sed nec etiam cogitare; præsertim cum adeò illos occupet, possideatque malignitas, ut penè nihil, si tamen eis aliquid bonæ affectionis reliquerit.’

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045aD: ‘Quia non est timor Dei ante oculos eorum; similiter neque amor.’

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045bA: ‘nisi quis dicat amorem ipsum potentiam amandi naturalem, quæ etsi radicaliter in illis remanet, adeò læsa, adeòque impedita est, ut fructus debitus ex ea nasci, vel exire non possit.’

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, III-IIae, c. XV, p. 1045bB: ‘Si immensa, & incogitabilis bonitas creatoris non movet eos, sive excitat in eis dilectionis saltem naturalis, affectum, quomodò quæ in infinitum minora sunt, sufficient vel illum, vel qui pietatis est affectum excitare in illis?’



rebuttals before coming to a conclusion. It is fascinating, therefore, to see the same ideas manifesting themselves in other religious contexts intended for less sophisticated audiences. In his collection of miracle tales designed for the instruction of novices, the *Dialogus miraculorum*, Caesarius of Heisterbach provides a critical examination of the relationship between belief, knowledge, and love in the world of demons. Here the matter turns upon the a slight but semantically crucial case distinction in the Latin form of God's name. The Monk, the senior figure in this instructive dialogue, is relating to the Novice a tale about a provocative and troublesome demon who can ape the grammatically incorrect prayers and creeds he has heard recited by lazy and unlearned people.

This demon begins the Apostle's Creed: 'Credo Deum Patrem omnipotentem' ('I believe God, father almighty'). Several people pull him up on this, correcting him: 'You should say, I believe *in* God' ('Cui...quidam dicerent: Dicere debes, Credo in Deum'). The demon tries again, this time using the dative: 'Credo Deo' ('I believe God'). Several learned men, understanding that the demon is deliberately trying to avoid the meaning of the accusative, demand that he say: 'Credo in Deum' ('I believe *in* God'), but in no way can the demon be induced to speak these words. When the Novice asks the Monk to explain the distinction between these various syntactical forms, the Monk replies: 'To believe *in* God is to go through love towards God, just as the Saviour says: "Everyone who lives and believes in me will have eternal life"'.<sup>34</sup>

The demon, by contrast, is simply admitting that he acknowledges God's existence. The Monk explains: 'As the Apostle James says, the demons believe and they tremble, but they do not love. They believe that God exists, they believe that his words are true, but they do not believe *in* him, because they do not love him'.<sup>35</sup> Demons are thus shown, in the general understanding of the thirteenth-century monastic (Cistercian) world, to be fundamentally intelligent and knowledgeable—not to mention clever and cheeky—but utterly without the capacity to love their Creator.

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<sup>34</sup> CAESARIUS OF HEISTERBACH. *Dialogus miraculorum*. Edited by Joseph Strange. 2 vols. Cologne, Bonn, and Brussels: J.M. Heberle, 1851. Vol. 1, D. III, cap. VI, p. 117 'Credere in Deum, est per dilectionem ire in Deum. Unde Salvator ait: *Omnis qui vivit, et credit in me, habet vitam aeternam.*'

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117: 'Daemon, sicut dicit Apostolus Jacobus, credit et contremiscit, sed non diligit. Credit Deum esse, credit vera eius verba esse, sed non credit in eum, quia non diligit eum.' See James 2. 19: 'et daemones credunt et contremescunt'.



### III. Do demons ever love humans?

A survey of medieval approaches to the capacity of demons to feel love would not be complete without touching on the complex question of the potential for love between demons and humans. Medieval speculations on this topic largely focused the physical aspect of such love, in terms of lust and the possibility of inter-species sexual relations (an issue that would become fraught in the early modern period with respect to the witch craze).

In fact, the question of miscegenation between angels/demons and humans had been a matter of concern since the earliest days of the Christian Church, as Paul's admonition to women to cover their heads 'on account of the angels' ('propter angelos') in 1 Corinthians 11. 10 makes clear.<sup>36</sup> This has been recognized as a reference to the 'Watcher Angels' of Genesis (Gen. 6. 1-4) who reputedly came down to earth in the earliest times and mingled with human women, drawn by their beauty ('quod essent pulchrae'), thus engendering a race of giants or heroes.<sup>37</sup>

Medieval scholastic philosophy was, however, quite firm in denying the possibility of demonic lust or desire as a goad to such miscegenation. In his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas notes that although it may seem that demons are disposed towards carnal delights, in fact what they truly delight in is drawing humans into sin. Consequently, although they may strive to achieve this through sexual temptation, in such situations they are acting solely out of envy, not lust.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> 1 Cor. 11. 10: 'ideo debet mulier potestatem habere supra caput propter angelos'.

<sup>37</sup> Gen. 6. 2: 'videntes filii Dei filias eorum quod essent pulchrae acceperunt uxores sibi ex omnibus quas elegerant.' This reference was read in this way by, for instance, Tertullian: see ELLIOTT, Dyan. 'Tertullian, the Angelic Life, and the Bride of Christ'. In *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*. Edited by Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, pp. 16-33. For several contextual studies of the origins of the myth of the 'Watcher Angels', see also *The Fall of the Angels*. Edited by AUFFARTH, Christoph and Loren T. STUCKENBRUCK. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004. And GIULEA, Dragos-Andrei. 'The Watchers' Whispers: Athenagoras's *Legatio* 25, 1-3 and the *Book of the Watchers*'. *Vigiliae Christianae*, 61 (2007), 258-81.

<sup>38</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS. ST, I, q. 63 a. 2 ad 1: 'Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Daemones non delectantur in obscenitatibus carnalium peccatorum; quasi ipsi afficiantur ad delectationes carnales, sed hoc totum ex invidia procedit, quod in peccatis hominum quibuscumque delectantur, in quantum sunt impedimenta humani boni.'



This position is fundamentally allied with Aquinas's conception of pleasure (*concupiscentia*) as a passion of the soul (*passio animae*), which means that it must necessarily be located both in the soul (in the sensitive appetite) and in the body.<sup>39</sup> As incorporeal beings, therefore, demons must remain wholly without the capacity to experience any passion of the soul, including desire (or lust).

While Aquinas's speculations are thus traditionally scholastic, William of Auvergne raises quite a different array of often inventive reasons why demons would not lust after humans. Perhaps the most surprising of these, given the subsequent early modern history of demonic paranoia, with its attendant images of grotesquely misshapen and animalistic demons, is the natural fineness of the demon as a spiritual being. William adduces the natural order of creation to show that demons, as wholly spiritual creatures (despite their current fallen nature), must still necessarily be a more refined form of creation than embodied humanity.

He asks: 'What lustful desire can there be in these kinds of spiritual beings for another species, and one far less noble than they themselves are?'. On the contrary, William asserts, it is far more likely that if demons did suffer from the goads of lust, their focus would be on their own kind, not another, 'since there is greater beauty in their own kind than in the race of women and men, for bodily beauty does not compare with spiritual beauty'.<sup>40</sup>

Also unexpected, perhaps, in the context of the philosophical writings of a priest and the bishop of Paris, is an additional argument against demonic lust that William draws from the human physiology of sex. He argues that the natural culmination of sexual activity, and its primary pleasure, is ejaculation. Since demons, as incorporeal beings, cannot emit semen, a major reason for their supposed proclivity towards sex is removed.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, IaIIae, q. 30 a. 1 co: 'Talis autem delectationis appetitus videtur esse concupiscentia, quae simul pertineat et ad animam et ad corpus, ut ipsum nomen concupiscentiae sonat. Unde concupiscentia, proprie loquendo, est in appetitu sensitivo'.

<sup>40</sup> WILLIAM OF AUVERGNE. *De universo*, IIIa-IIae, c. XXV, p. 1070bG-H: 'Quæ concupiscentia libidinosa potest esse hujusmodi spirituum in substantias alterius speciei, & longè ignobiliores, quàm ipsi sunt?...Amplius. Si est eis concupiscentia, & tantus ardor carnalis voluptatis, cur non in propriam speciem magis inardescunt, quàm in alienam, cum major pulchritudo sit in speciei propria, quàm in speciei mulierum, & virorum; non enim comparabilis est pulchritudo corporalis ad pulchritudinem spiritualem.'



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Against those who suggest that demons impregnate human women by various means of collecting and transferring semen into them, William retorts that this kind of artificial insemination hardly bears the hallmarks of unconstrained desire and so does not provide evidence of demonic lust.<sup>41</sup> Finally William turns to the question of sexual preference in order to demolish the idea that demons feel lust for humans. If demons were truly driven mad by the raging fires of lust, he suggests, there would be no limits as to their sexual targets, and males would be as much at risk of demonic copulation as women apparently are.

Yet, he contends, there is and never has been any account of demons behaving in a sodomitic manner. Consequently, he concludes, there is no lust in demons—and it is all the more shameful that there should exist sodomitic lust between men, when even demons, who strive to pollute humanity in almost every way possible, hold themselves aloof from such an activity.<sup>42</sup>

This understanding of the incapacity of demons as incorporeal, spiritual creatures to experience lust does not seem to have been limited to the world of scholastic philosophy, but to have permeated through to pastoral and monastic contexts as well. This is revealed by one of the tales told by Caesarius of Heisterbach in the *Dialogus miraculorum*. A pious young girl sworn to virginity is constantly assailed by a demon in the form of a handsome and well-dressed young man.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, IIIa-IIae, c. XXV, p. 1070bG-H: ‘Non est igitur commixtio inter hujusmodi spiritus, & mulieres, vera inquam commixtio à parte spirituum, cum nulla sit ex parte illorum seminis generativi in vas generationis transfusio...Dico in hoc, quia nulla est voluptas conjunctionis hujusmodi, cum voluptas concubitus potissimum consistat in effusione seminis, nulla autem est voluptas libidinosa in translatione seminis hujusmodi.’

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, IIIa-IIae, c. XXV, p. 1070bG-H: ‘quomodò à sodomitica libidine immunes essent, ut non vel in viros nostros, vel in masculos suos concupiscentia insanirent...Nec igitur prætereundum est, quòd nec ipsi invicem istam abominationem, videlicet sodomiticam exercere, vel unquam exercuisse, dicti sunt. In quo non mediocriter confunditur sodomitarum flagitiositas, cum ab ea se contineant ipsi maligni spiritus, qui ad fædandam humanam naturam totis studiis invigilant, & totis viribus elaborant.’ Elliott notes that in the thirteenth century, ‘Demons play a modest, but interesting, role in securing “normative” sexual categories through their revulsion from “unnatural” sex’: see ELLIOTT. ‘On Angelic Disembodiment and the Incredible Purity of Demons’. In Elliott. *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. pp. 127-56 (p. 151).



The demon's motive is given as the traditional one of envy— 'Invidens diabolus tantae virtuti'—although Caesarius soon after also refers to the demon as 'that licentious spirit' ('lascivus ille spiritus'), indicating perhaps a certain contemporary ambivalence in understandings of demonic sexual desire. Finally compelled by the girl's suspicious questioning of who and what it actually is, the demon blurts out: 'I am a devil' ('Ego sum diabolus'). Intriguingly, the girl then argues that such a creature should have no association with things of the flesh: 'Why then do you demand a carnal union, which is known to be contrary to your nature?'<sup>43</sup> It is telling that not only is a (presumably unlettered) young girl shown to be aware of the incompatibility of sexuality and incorporeal natures, but that she also characterizes it as a matter that is widely known: 'dignoscitur'. In turn the demon replies that it does not require physical consummation with her, merely her consent to the sin.<sup>44</sup>

The matter of demonic sexuality, having been raised, is then settled in the traditional manner: the demon is not lustful of itself, but works only to provoke sin in humans. Yet it was clearly a troubling matter and Caesarius reverts to it at the end of the tale, having the Novice restate his surprise that a demon should, against its own nature, seek and desire carnal copulation.<sup>45</sup> To this the Monk replies that it is not surprising that demons should importune women, but extraordinary that they should actually become physically intimate with them—although he then goes on to relate subsequent tales in which just such things occur.<sup>46</sup>

Beyond the question of whether or not demons could feel lust in their seductions of humans, it is revealing that a number of medieval tales posit a deeper emotional connection—love of some sort—developing between demons and their human lovers.<sup>47</sup> Caesarius relates a story of a relationship

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<sup>43</sup> *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. Strange, D. III, Cap. VI, p. 116: 'quid ergo exigit carnale coniugium, quod naturae tuae dignoscitur esse contrarium?'

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116: 'Tu tantum mihi consenti, nihil aliud a te nisi copulae consensum requiro.'

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119: 'non desino mirari, quod daemon, cum spiritus sit, copulam carnalem contra suam naturam concupiscat et requirat.'

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119: 'Non mirum quod daemones feminas procantur; sed quod illis commiscentur mirabile est valde.'

<sup>47</sup> Elliott notes wryly: 'Once a woman had consented to seduction by an incubus, the resulting bond was seemingly as indissoluble and stifling as a bad marriage': see ELLIOTT. 'From Sexual Fantasy to Demonic Defloration'. In Elliott. *Fallen Bodies*. pp. 35-60 (p. 54).



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between a young girl and her demon lover in which the girl, locked away in an upper room by her father because of her alluring beauty, has been seduced by a demon in the form of a handsome man.<sup>48</sup>

In short, the girl is brought both to love ('in amorem') and a sexual relationship. Breaking down in tears some time later and confessing her situation to her father, he removes her at once across the Rhine, hoping by this to sever her association with the demon. When the demon discovers his loss, he is violently upset and confronts the father. It is telling that when he demands to know the whereabouts of his lover he exclaims: 'why have you taken my wife away from me?' ('quare abstulisti mihi uxorem meam?'), indicating that, at least in his mind, there existed the sense of a formal and recognizable relationship between himself and his lover.<sup>49</sup>

By the same token, in his *Speculum naturale*, Vincent of Beauvais relates a tale concerning a demonic female phantasm (whom the marginal gloss in the 1624 edition refers to as a 'Diabolus succuba') who is found swimming in the ocean by a young man. Taken with her, despite the fact that he cannot coerce her to utter any words, he leads her home and marries her ('tandem in vxorem solemniter accepit'), and in time she bears him a son. Later upbraided by a friend for having taken a demon ('phantasma') into his home, the young man begins to grow afraid and, threatening his son at sword point, demands that his demon wife speak out and tell him her origins.

She replies: 'Woe to you, wretched man, you have lost a good wife ('vtilem...vxorem') now that you have forced me to speak. I would have been with you and it would have been good for you, if you had allowed me to maintain the silence that was enjoined upon me'.<sup>50</sup> At that she vanishes, and later takes her son with her. Here then we find the demonic partner in a

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<sup>48</sup> It is, incidentally, a testament to the contemporary interest in how the machinations of demons functioned in practice that Caesarius specifies that she is tempted both internally by suggestion—'intus suggestione latenti'—and externally by the demon's blandishing words—'foris locutione blandiente': see *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. Strange, D. III, Cap. VIII, p. 121.

<sup>49</sup> *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. Strange, p. 121. This is also discussed by ELLIOTT in 'From Sexual Fantasy to Demonic Defloration', p. 55.

<sup>50</sup> VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS. *Speculum naturale*, Bk II, cap. CXXVI, cols 156-157: 'Væ inquit tibi misero, vtilem perdis vxorem dum me cogis effari. Tecum forem, & tibi benè foret, si iniunctum mihi silentium tenere permisisses.'



relationship with a human identifying it specifically as a formal marriage and a monogamous, procreative, and long-term bond. It is perhaps worth noting that also present in this story is the assumption that a mother demon will act to save the life of her half-human offspring, even where that means acting counter to her own best interests.

## Conclusion

Despite a dominant cultural paradigm that depicted demons as consumed by hatred, wrath, envy, and malice, Western medieval culture appears also to have harboured a submerged but persistent memory of demons as creatures once endowed with love and still occasionally liable to its prickings. Peter Olivi theorized the companionable love—the *amicitia*—between the angels in Heaven as the primary motivating impulse behind their rebellion and fall, since their experiential enjoyment of each other subsumed the love they should properly have borne towards their Creator. Once flung down from Heaven, there remained in these now demonic creatures the original natural love (“*naturalis dilectio*”) with which they had been created, but in a form irretrievably stunted and invalid.

This love was not and could not be wholly extinguished, but at the same time, it was unable ever to function as it should. Incapable now of loving either each other or God, their relations with humans remained, however, a disturbingly open question. While the possibility of lust was denied to them by scholastic philosophy, their potential to enter and experience love relationships with humans was raised in a range of monastic tales, harking back perhaps to earlier folkloric stories.

Interrogating the capacity for love amongst demons also raises troubling questions about the nature of love itself. In such scholastic theories and monastic tales, it is revealed as a force that can, through misdirection, overthrow the divine order of Creation, lead to dangerous inter-species miscegenation, and become degraded into the negative passions of pride, ambition, envy, and jealousy. Love in the time of demons is, then, a contradictory concept, producing more sympathetic views of demonic beings, yet darker and more contingent understandings of the boundaries and consequences of love.



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