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**Uneasy Humanity:
Perpetual Wrestling with Evils**

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'Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness'



**Uneasy Humanity:
Perpetual Wrestling with Evil**

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Acedia's Avatars in the Medieval World: Medical, Religious and Literary Perspectives (The Portuguese Case)

Ana Maria Machado

Abstract

In this paper I aim at studying the representation of the acedia in Portuguese medieval literature focusing mainly on hagiography and on moral didactic texts. I will begin by analyzing the concept of acedia, how it relates to such sins as sadness and sloth through the Middle Ages, how it links to the medical approach and how it is reflected in the narrative literature.

The ascetic Evagrius Ponticus is the first to identify acedia as an evil thought in a list of eight companions. Cassiano and Gregory the Great inherited his list and made some changes to the now-called vices, due to their different contexts and objectives. In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas established acedia's meaning and reintroduced the word in the index of the seven deadly sins. What prevails is the idea of a universal moral disorder, disconnected from bodily symptoms, despite the fortune of humoral theories. Nevertheless, literary representations did not always follow those discussions. In Portuguese late medieval copies and translations of the Lives of the Desert Fathers, the exotic word acedia is most of the times replaced by synonymous or periphrasis, even though the situation or sin are clearly *acedious*.

The *aggiornamento* can be seen only in the 15th century's *Leal Conselheiro*. In a first set of chapters its author, King Duarte, equates the spiritual sense of acedia with the medical interpretation of melancholic humour as well as its semantic links with the Portuguese word *saudade*. He adds his personal experience on how he obtained a cure and concludes that melancholy was in fact a sin. At the same time, King Duarte replaces acedia with sloth, a very laic conversion and a sign of the new times.

The values of acedia, classical explanations of melancholic humour and its bonds with today's depression are quite significant in Portuguese medieval literature.

Key Words: Acedia, Sloth, Melancholy, Sin, Depression, Middle Ages, Portuguese Literature, Apothegms, Hagiography, *Leal Conselheiro*.

The term '*acedia*' has now almost completely disappeared from everyday vocabulary. Consequently, the use of it at a conference on evil will

inevitably evoke a remote past, when spiritual ill-being, resulting from tedium and anxiety, was considered a serious threat to human salvation.

Based on a corpus consisting of the desert apothegms and hagiographies (copied and translated in Portuguese libraries) and the *Leal Conselheiro*, a work of moral education by the Portuguese king Dom Duarte (1391-1438), I will describe the way in which the vice or sin¹ of *acedia* was conceived at two crucial moments: (1) in the religious treatises of the Eastern hermits, with desert literature (1.1) as its most expressive manifestation; and (2) by Gregory the Great, and later, in the scholastic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Then, (3) I will go on to examine how, in the medical world, the melancholic humour was considered to display symptoms very similar in nature to those covered by the religious concept of *acedia*. In the last part (4), I will describe a case that is unusual in that it links the ancient (though still active) religious tradition with a personal account of melancholy experienced by the Portuguese king. Finally, I will conclude (5) with some observations on the relationship between *acedia* and the modern concept of depression.

I will argue that by the time *acedia* had almost been forgotten and replaced by sloth, Dom Duarte merged it with melancholy. From his point of view, the melancholic humour turned out to be a sin, despite his considerable knowledge about medicine.

1. The concept of *Acedia* in religious treatises and desert literature

In his *Treatise on the Practical Life*, a work designed to transmit knowledge acquired from the Desert Fathers, Evagrius Ponticus (c. 345-c. 400) describes the soul's route to purification. This involves overcoming eight demons that assail the hermit, including that of *acedia*. Here we have the first systematic formulation of what would later become one of the seven deadly sins. Despite the affinities between *acedia* and the Stoic vice of 'neglect', not to mention its presence in Origen (185-232), the fact that it was included in this grouping was something new. The demon of *acedia* is presented through the effects that it produces. Likened to the *daemonia meridiano* of Psalm 91, it provokes in the monk a sense of timelessness, which causes him to stare fixedly at the window or prompts him to leave his cell in the hope of a change or merely to catch sight of a brother. He feels an aversion to the place where he lives, to the life he leads and to manual labour, and begins to have doubts about the value of charity, as well as feelings of having been abandoned. He is attracted by the idea of seeking out another place and is haunted by memories of his former life, which exacerbate the hardship of asceticism and tempt him to flee. The danger of this vice is such that it is expressly observed that "No other demon follows on immediately after this one"².

With Cassian (c. 360-c.435), this most unstable of vices moves out of the desert into the monastery³ and simultaneously becomes westernized. The

original formulation is maintained, although it is now more detailed in the implications that it has for one's daily life and relationship with companions. Following his conference with the Abbot Serapion, Cassian proceeds to list the vices that arise from the principle ones, which, in the case of *acedia*, are laziness, sleepiness, rudeness, restlessness, roving about, instability of mind and body, talkativeness and curiosity⁴.

There are slight differences between these two authors; in particular, Cassian insists more on the seductiveness of social activities, probably as a result of the monastic context, which of course is more propitious to communication than the hermitage.

Representations of *acedia* in eremitic literature and the success of the *Vitae Patrum* in the west will have perpetuated an awareness of this vice and its prevention or cure, at least in the monastic context. The similarity between doctrinal formulations and the hagiographies and apothegms of the Desert Fathers, who were its most eloquent witnesses, warrants further illustration⁵. In medieval Portugal, this oriental literature acquired an important position, through Latin copies and, to a lesser extent, translations into Portuguese⁶. In the light of research carried out, priority will be given here to the Codices of Alcobaca XV/367 (12th century) and CCLXXXIII/BNL 454 (end 12th century-beginning 13th). Despite the time span separating these texts from their originals, they are nevertheless very faithful to the Latin translations. The scarce and partial versions existing in Portuguese refer only twice to manifestations of *acedia*. This could be interpreted as a loss of sensitivity to what had been the eremitic sin *par excellence* at a time (14th and 16th centuries) when *acedia* had already been supplanted by its rival 'sloth'.

The Latin and Portuguese texts we received describe the monk's condition as being one of constant restlessness⁷ and temptation⁸ (although serenity is also presented strategically as the conquest of immobility). It is noticeable that, although the vice is clearly present, it is rarely mentioned by name, but instead tends to be represented through its symptoms. We could perhaps deduce from this that the term never fully entered the Latin vocabulary.

The *Life of St Anthony* by St Athanasius (c. 295-373) is the only text in which the Latin translation makes use of the term. It does so in the context of a list of symptoms of harmful thoughts, all of which coincide with the hyperonymic conceptualization of 'vice' and its hyponym '*acedia*'⁹.

In one of the saint's temptations, the description of *acedia* is so impressive that the episode is evoked pedagogically as the example to follow¹⁰. Goaded by boredom and by confused thoughts, the saint begs help from God. Some time later, he arises and sees someone like himself who is seated and working, from time to time getting up to pray. The angel of the Lord, sent to correct him, tells him that if he proceeds in this way he will be saved. In the Portuguese translation, the temptation is imputed to a second

personage, who requests clarification from the saint. This reveals the increasing tendency to idealize saints, particularly in vernacular translations, which actively resist representing them with failings of this type¹¹.

In the apothegms, the sense of *acedia* is amplified and often expressed through the radical injunction "Remain in your cell"¹². Hence, the error of sinful thoughts is countered by the practice of constant patience in the cell¹³. That is to say, the *pervagatio mentis* is perceived as a lesser evil, provided that the monk does not abandon his own space¹⁴.

The shame associated with *acedia* leads some disciples to reject suggestions that they move out of their cell, after it has been built, for fear of being misinterpreted. However, for the abbot, who is indifferent to the possibility of scandal, it signifies merely detachment¹⁵. As *Vitae Patrum* are made up of sentences and short stories related by the monks, it is natural that the demands made on the hermits were not received in a uniform fashion; consequently, they oscillate between radicalism and tolerance, opening up the way for a blurring of boundaries.

In this corpus, *acedia* is taken as the starting point in only one narrative, where it is responsible for the monk's perdition, proving that *fuga mundi* was not an option for everyone. Moreover, in the apothegms, when the narrative expands, this vice appears linked to lust, although the two are far apart in causes and derivations. The same occurs with the sin of pride, as we can see in the *Life of St John of Lykopolis*. This vice leads to deterioration into *acedia*, unleashing sensual desires in a whirl of thoughts that would propel the hermit out into the world were it not for the support provided by the brotherhood, even while he is wandering in the desert¹⁶. On the other hand, in another episode from the same *Life*, the outcome for the monk, now overcome by lust, is fatal; despair of salvation culminates with return to the world, the utopia towards which *acedia* tends¹⁷. Thus, we are presented with a hierarchy of sinfulness, in which flight into the world constitutes the last stage of perdition, much more serious than negligence, inertia and restless thoughts.

There is a tension between the inner temptation to flee and the urge to escape those that seek out the hermit to learn from him, which the abbot, a disinterested critic and an inner voice try to overcome. This is then, an unstable vice, oscillating between tedium and the proliferation of projects that invade the monk. This opposition between hypo- and hyperactivity persists, in different forms, over time.

2. The concept of *Acedia* in Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas

When Gregory the Great took up Cassian's list of vices, he did so in a context, which, despite being monastic, offered opportunities for a more universal application. This is illustrated by the fact that *acedia* is now omitted from the list, having merged with sorrow. Instead, it is envy, the new social

vice, that prevails, as it undermines community relations. The suppression of *acedia* marked a substantial alteration in the target public. Nevertheless, three of its derivations, in Cassian's formulation, are in Gregory shared between sorrow (torpor in relation to precepts and a roving mind) and avarice (dissatisfaction).

Throughout these treatises and narratives, *acedia* is characterised by what Wenzel describes as a lack of definition, falling somewhere between anxiety and indolence, tedium and sloth, uneasiness and sleepiness¹⁸.

Despite having been formally erased from the list of deadly sins, *acedia* continued to represent a danger for monks, particularly through the influence of Cassian, one of the readings recommended by St. Benedict and Cassiodorus, and the importance that Benedictine monasticism had on penitential practices in Europe¹⁹.

With Thomas Aquinas (1225 or 1227-1274), *acedia* reappears in the place of sorrow. Following Gregory and Isidore of Seville (the only authors referred to in this respect), Aquinas analyses the origins and effects of this evil. Sorrow for the divine good is caused by antagonism between the desires of the soul and of the flesh; those that allow themselves to be governed by the latter experience spirituality as a constraint and long to reject the cause of their sorrow and give themselves over to bodily pleasures. The various phases of the flight from God coincide with the vices derived from *acedia*: hopelessness, belligerence, torpor, rancour, malice, and uneasiness of the mind. When the soul is dissipated in all directions, it becomes restless, and as a consequence, curiosity and talkativeness develop. As for the body, its inability to remain in one place is described as nervousness, and there is instability as regards places and projects. Although Aquinas does not neglect some of the outer manifestations of this sin, his formulation clearly focuses upon the internal spiritual dimension, going beyond an oscillation between the *acedia* of the body (understood as sloth) and the *acedia* of the soul (i.e. sorrow)²⁰.

From the 13th century, with the reformist attitude adopted by the Church, the obligation to take annual confession established by the 4th Lateran Council (1215), the pastoral activities of the mendicant orders, and the subsequent surge in catechisms and penances, the sin of *acedia* became relatively familiar to the laity as one of (what were now known as) the seven deadly sins. However, the meaning was now closer to the bodily sense of *acedia*. Since Carolingian culture, there had been a stress upon *acedia vel ociositas* (Jonas of Orleans m. 843 or 844), with the sense of indolence or sloth. Between the 13th and 15th centuries, this conception was taken up again, and sloth became one of the vices most used to describe the sin of the laymen. Indeed, the universalisation of *acedia* as a vice was paralleled by a new value attributed to work and to man's role as social being²¹. Hence, this was the dimension that prevailed, as is attested by the present day catechism, which

maintains equivalence between sloth and *acedia*. However, the second term has fallen into disuse in everyday language²².

3. **Melancholic humour in the medieval world**

During this period, there was little dialogue between the religious-didactic discourse on *acedia* and the medical writings of the time. On the margins of this theological reflection (and long before it), natural philosophy and medicine had attempted to explore the origins of melancholy in different ways. It was Hippocrates, or his son Polybius, that was responsible for the theory that related the pathology of the humours to cosmological speculations. The four humours considered essential to human nature (the sanguine, choleric, melancholy and phlegmatic), produced by blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm respectively, were thus affected by the four seasons of the year and distinguished by the doctrine of qualities. In this case, black bile (the etymological root of the term 'melancholy')²³ was described as cold and dry, like autumn. As a disorder, it was characterised especially by mood alterations; later, there would also be physical and mental repercussions.

With this particularity, it moved into the sphere of psychology, as the main symptoms were constant anxiety and weariness²⁴. The idea of pathological melancholy was important for the development of the concept, both from the point of view of moral philosophy and therapeutic medicine. The Stoics considered it to be a serious and dangerous disease²⁵. In medicine, Galen (129-216) and the Arab doctors of the 9th and 10th centuries, including Avicenna (980-1037), developed the doctrine of Rufus of Ephesus (2nd century AD), establishing its symptoms as depression, misanthropy, assailment by all kinds of desires and eccentricities, unreasonable sorrow or euphoria, a propensity for phobias and manias – that is to say, a long list of psychological disturbances, some of which bear affinities with *acedia*. Despite this, *acedia* and melancholy are only occasionally extended beyond their respective domains.

4. ***Acedia* and melancholy in the *Leal Conselheiro* of Dom Duarte**

Returning now to the Portuguese corpus, there is very little information as regards the bibliography used in the field of medicine. In the universities, Aristotle, Galen and Hippocrates were taught²⁶, while King Duarte's library contained books by Avicenna ("*livros Davicena*")²⁷. Isidore of Seville also requires a mention, as he reflected upon both the philosophical-religious and medical approaches to the issue, though separately. This legacy common to the medieval western world notably includes Petrus Hispanus, Portuguese author of medical works in the 13th century, and an important divulger of Aristotle and Arab medicine in the west.

In medieval literature, the most interesting Portuguese case concerns the monarch, Dom Duarte and his *Leal Conselheiro*, not so much for the

syncretism of doctrines on sin, but rather for his critical description of his own experience of melancholy. In this “guide to applied moral philosophy”²⁸, the coexistence of different versions of the deadly or capital sins (both as regards number and content) suggests that, in the conventional culture of the era, the boundaries between many of these sins were blurred, in the absence of rigid doctrine on the issue. His reflection stretches over three thematic sections of different lengths, each taking a different perspective. The focus is on Cassian and Gregory the Great²⁹, but authors such as Isidore of Seville, Hugh of Saint Victor, Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas are also taken into account.

I will focus here on the first sequence of chapters dealing with nine sins (pride, vainglory, envy, wrath, sorrow, idleness, avarice, lust and gluttony) for various reasons. *Acedia* appears in the guise of sloth (the more appropriate name for idleness)³⁰ and is characterised by the “procrastination of deeds to be done”, a “lack of devotion”, “disgust with life” and “excessive repose”³¹. Maintaining its pre-Aquinas ambivalence. The greatest development in relation to the texts mentioned up to now lies in the replacement of *acedia* with melancholy. In fact, in the chapters immediately preceding this sequence, Dom Duarte connects the vice of sorrow, which is deliberately presented in Cassian’s terms³², with its “offspring”, which includes, after “*saudade*” (a form of yearning considered to be specifically Portuguese), the “disconcerted disposition, the true disorder of the melancholic humour”³³. In the Portuguese medieval world, this appears to be the first occurrence of a physical explanation for a specific sin, although, given the development of sorrow and idleness, and considering the descriptions of symptoms, melancholy is perhaps closer to *acedia*, even when it is verbally disguised as sloth. The humoral explanation appears to be relatively recent, because, after referring to “the sin of sorrow which proceeds from the disconcerted will”, he adds “which is today considered in most cases to be a disorder of the melancholic humour”³⁴. This adaptation to a new terminology illustrates the extent to which the new kind of medically sanctioned knowledge was already widespread. From the symptomatological perspective, however, it is not new, except perhaps for the identification of the cause of his own “despair” in a sudden excess of work, which took him away from the outdoor pursuits that he was used to, and also in the horrors of the plague that was devastating Lisbon. The king thus saw himself as prevented from “experiencing legitimate enjoyment”, in a process of gradually developing sorrow. As Avicenna argues in the *Canon of Medicine* (1564), these conditions were enough to alter an individual’s mood, even if the melancholic humour was not dominant in his temperament³⁵. However, when “the grace of God” granted him the “knowledge that it was an infirmity and that all wrong care was temptation from the enemy”, he himself sought a cure that did not clash with Christian morality. Melancholy was thus transformed into a sin³⁶ and Dom Duarte, and, understanding the advantages of assisting

his sick mother, dispensed with the help of physicians. With his pain attenuated, he gradually started to experience “feelings of pleasure and enjoyment” when he was out “on the hillside hunting” and in conversations with friends, and by abandoning solitude.

5. *Acedia* and the modern concept of depression

The clear similarity between melancholy and moral *acedia* has interested many thinkers, philosophers and doctors. Jackson sees in *acedia* something more than depression or a synonym of melancholy³⁷; Irvine likens it to the *ennui* (spleen, saturnine melancholy, etc) of poets, artists and intellectuals³⁸, while Lauand relates it to the causes of depression³⁹, or more precisely, like Daly, to dysthymia (a light and prolonged depressive state that excludes mania and euphoria)⁴⁰. These precise technical distinctions, resulting from the development of psychiatry, show just how sophisticated were the anthropological and medical intuitions of the past, even more so given the lack of technical methods of diagnosis.

In the specific case of Dom Duarte's cure, the psychiatrist Fusswerk-Fursay considers it an example of “creditivity”, an indispensable component of the cure for neurosis. As regards both the obsessive aspect (which Dom Duarte suffered from in relation to death) and the delirious, the patient has to be fully convinced that a particular solution will work, for this will set off psychic dynamics that will lead him to a new state of health⁴¹.

From this brief exploration, we can conclude that psychiatry, psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychiatry had precursors in medieval reflections on *acedia* and melancholy. *Acedia* differs from depression as regards the moral responsibility that was attributed to the individual sufferer in the past. Today, the concept of guilt has almost entirely disappeared with “the notion that all acts, processes and mental dispositions have specific neuronal correlates”⁴². Indeed, in many cases, these insufficiencies are no longer imputed to individual freedom but to disorders of the organic material of which man is made. Once more, this is a field in which the theological domain overlaps with the psychoneurological.

Notes

¹ These terms are not always used with precision and are today often taken as synonyms, just as they were in many medieval treatises. R. Daly, ‘Before Depression: The Medieval Vice of Acedia’, *Psychiatry: Interpersonal & Biological Processes*, vol. 70, 1, 2007 <<http://www.atypon-link.com/GPI/doi/abs/10.1521/psyc.2007.70.1.30>>. A. Machado *A representação do pecado na hagiografia medieval. Heranças de uma*

espiritualidade eremítica. Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 2006, *passim*.

² <http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/01_Prak/00a_start.htm>. Evagrius Ponticus, *Traité pratique ou le moine*, A. Guillaumont and C. Guillaumont (eds.), t. II, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971, p. 527.

³ C. Casagrande and S. Vecchio, *Histoire des péchés capitaux au Moyen Age*, Paris, Éditions Flammarion, 2003, p. 128.

⁴ J. Cassian, *Conférences*, t. I, E. Pichery (ed.), Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1955, p. 209.

⁵ In the light of the aims of this work, I have chosen these texts because they constitute a vast laboratory on the subject of *acedia*. This has meant that medieval works from the 14th and 15th centuries (e.g. *Horto do Esposo* or *Castelo Perigoso*), which contain fewer examples of this particular vice, will have to wait for a future study.

⁶ For a more detailed reference to these texts, see A. Machado (2006), pp. 119-216.

⁷ Cod. 454, f. 128v, *Patrologia Latina* (from now on *PL*) 73, Lib. V, 7.5, col. 893. Please refer to quotation 1, in the Appendix.

⁸ Cod. 454, f. 143v; *PL* 73, Lib. V, 15.2. Please refer to quotation 2, in the Appendix.

⁹ Athanasius. "Vita Beati Antonii Abbatis interprete Evagrio". *PL* 23: 143. H. Ellershaw (trans.), 'Life of Antony, Select Writings of Athanasius', in *Library of Nicene and post Nicene Fathers*, New York; 1957, pp. 195-221 <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/VITA-ANTONY.html>>. Please refer to quotation 3, in the Appendix.

¹⁰ Cod. 454, fl. 130; *PL* 73, Lib.V, Pelágio, 7.34; col 901.

¹¹ *PL* V, 7.1, p. 60. The Latin version by Jacobus de Voragine uses the term "tedio" (2000); the Portuguese translation is included in the *Flos Sanctorum*, of 1513, fl. 26v.

¹² Again cod. 454, fl. 130; *PL* 73, Lib.V, Pelágio, 7.34; col 901. Please refer to quotation 4, in the Appendix.

¹³ Cod. 454, fl. 130, *PL* 73, Lib V, 7.30, col 900. Please refer to quotation 5, in the Appendix.

¹⁴ Cod. 454, fl. 130v, *PL* 73, Lib V, 7.37, col 902. Please refer to quotation 6, in the Appendix.

¹⁵ Cod. 454, fl. 126 v; *PL* 73, Lib. V, 6.4, cols. 888-889. Please refer to quotation 7, in the Appendix.

¹⁶ Cod. 367, fl. 9; *PL* 21, 402. Please refer to quotation 8, in the Appendix.

¹⁷ Cod. 367, fl. 8; cod. 454, fs. 118v-120. Please refer to quotation 9, in the Appendix. On the Portuguese translation of this passage, see Machado, 2007.

¹⁸ '«Acedia» 700-1200', *Traditio*, vol. XXII, 1966, pp. 73-102.

¹⁹ S. Wenzel, *The sin of sloth: acedia in medieval thought and literature*, Chapel Hill, SW, University of North Carolina Press, 1967, p. 29.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, D. Saurel (trad.), 2005, qu. 11, a.4. <<http://docteurangelique.free.fr>>; *Somme théologique*. R. Bernard (transl.), Paris – Tournai – Rome, Desclée & Cie, 1931, II. II. Qu. 35 a.4. Wenzel may be exaggerating when he presents the *acedia* of Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics as a general and universal form of moral disorder. Although the various manifestations of this vice clearly cover this spectrum, we should not forget that the ultimate goal is the Divine good and the salvation of the soul.

²¹ C. Casagrande and S. Vecchio (2003), pp. 143-151.

²² For the philosopher Josef Pieper (1904-1997), this notion of sloth represents a great depreciation of the ethical concept of *acedia*. Underlying this is the “religious sanction of the capitalist work ethic”, which not only diminishes the former theological and moral dimension of *acedia*, making it into something banal, but also inverts it. J. Lauand, ‘O Pecado Capital da Acídia na Análise de Tomás de Aquino’ (notas de conferência) proferida no Seminário Internacional *Os Pecados Capitais na Idade Média*. Univ. Fed. do Rio Grande do Sul, 2004 <<http://www.pecapi.com.br/>>.

²³ *Mélas, aina, an 'negro'* [black] + *kholê, ês 'bílis'*[bile]. A. Houaiss, M. Villar, and F. Franco, *O Dicionário Eletrônico Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* (versão 1-0). Rio de Janeiro, 2001, s.v. ‘Melancolia’..

²⁴ I have not mentioned natural melancholy and its relationship with art the thesis presented in *Problem XXX, I* as this was only reassessed in the 15th century. R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, Erwin and F. Saxl, *Saturne et la mélancolie: études historiques et philosophiques: nature, religion, médecine et art*, [Paris], Gallimard, 1989, pp. 39-44 and 123-124.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

²⁶ A. Marques, *Portugal na crise dos séculos XIV e XV*, Lisboa, Editorial Presença, 1987, p. 414.

²⁷ “These are the books owned by the king, Don Duarte”. D. Duarte, *Leal Conselheiro*. J. Piel (ed.), Lisboa, Bertrand, 1942, p. 414.

²⁸ R. Lorenzo, ‘*Leal Conselheiro*’, in G. Lanciani and G. Tavani (eds.), *Dicionário da Literatura Medieval Galega e Portuguesa*, Lisboa, Caminho, 1993, p. 383.

²⁹ On the reception of these doctrines, see Machado, 2006, 368-377.

³⁰ J. Piel (ed.), Lisboa, Bertrand, 1942, Ch. 26, p. 98.

³¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 26, pp. 99-101.

³² “St John Cassian says of sorrow, in his book of Establishments, and in the Collations of the Fathers (...)”. *Ibid.*, ch.. 18, p. 64.

³³ *Ibid.*, ch. 18, p. 67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 19, p. 67.

³⁵ David-Peyre, "Neurasthenie et croyance chez D. Duarte de Portugal", *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português*, Vol. 15, 1980, p. 527.

³⁶ In the 12th century, Hugh of Saint Victor also established a link between sorrow/*acedia* (he uses them synonymously) and melancholy, although he does so in other terms: "Rancor este ex atrabili". *PL* 176, col. 1001.

³⁷ S. Jackson, *Melancholia & Depression. From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times*. New Haven - London, Yale University Press, 1986, p. 66.

³⁸ I. Irvine, 'Acedia, Tristitia and Sloth: Early Christian Forerunners to Chronic Ennui', *Humanitas*, 1999 <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6691/is_1_12/ai_n28755280>.

³⁹ J. Lauand, 'O Pecado Capital da Acídia na Análise de Tomás de Aquino' (notas de conferência) proferida no Seminário Internacional *Os Pecados Capitais na Idade Média*, Univ. Fed. do Rio Grande do Sul, 2004 <<http://www.pecapi.com.br/>>.

⁴⁰ R. Daly, Robert, "Before Depression: The Medieval Vice of Acedia", *Psychiatry: Interpersonal & Biological Processes*. vol. 70, 1, 2007 <<http://www.atypon-link.com/GPI/doi/abs/10.1521/psyc.2007.70.1.30>>.

⁴¹ Fusswerk-Fursay, 'La notion de croyance et son importance en psychiatrie'. *Revue d'Histoire de la Médecine hébraïque*, vol. 124, 1978, pp. 17-20, *apud* Y. David-Peyre, "Neurasthenie et croyance chez D. Duarte de Portugal". *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português*, Vol. 15, 1980, pp. 528-530.

⁴² O. Sacks and J. Hirsh, 'A Neurology of Belief', *Annals of Neurology*. vol. 63, 2, 2008, pp. 129-130.

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Appendix Quotations in English

1. A hermit who was anxious went to Theodore of Pherme and told him all about it. He said to him, 'Humble yourself, put yourself in subjection, go and live with others.' So he went to a mountain, and there lived with a community. Later he returned to Theodore and said, 'Not even when I lived with other men did I find rest.' He said to him, 'If you're not at rest as a hermit, nor when you're in a community, why did you want to be a monk? Wasn't it in order to suffer? Tell me, how many years have you been a monk?' He said, 'Eight.' Theodore said, 'Believe me, I've been a monk for seventy years, and I've not been able to get a single day's peace. Do you expect to have peace after only eight years?' (Ward, 2003:60-61)

2. Anthony also said, 'I saw the devil's snares set all over the earth, and I groaned and said, "What can pass through them?" I heard a voice saying, "Humility".' (Ward, 2003:148)

3. From which arise fear in the heart, tumult and confusion of thought, dejection, hatred towards them who live a life of discipline, indifference, grief, remembrance of kinsfolk and fear of death, and finally desire of evil things, disregard of virtue and unsettled habits. (Ellershaw, 1954)
(Latin: ... tristitia, odium circa studentes in bono, acedia)

4. A brother asked a hermit, 'What am I to do, abba? I do nothing like a monk. I eat, drink and sleep as I like, I am much troubled by vile thoughts, I shift from task to task, and my mind wanders everywhere.' The hermit answered, 'Stay in your cell, and do what you can without anxiety. It is not much that you do now, yet it is the same as when Anthony did mighty things in the desert. I trust God that whoever stays in his cell for God's sake, and guards his conscience, will be found where Anthony is.' (Ward, 2003:71)

5. A brother said to a hermit, 'My thoughts wander, and I am troubled.' He answered, 'Go on sitting in your cell, and your thoughts will come back from their wanderings. If a she-ass is tethered, her foal skips and gambols all round her but always comes back to the mother. It is like that for anyone who for God's sake sits patiently in his cell. Though his thoughts wander for a time, they will come back to Him again.' (Ward, 2003:70)

6. When a brother was troubled by thoughts of leaving the monastery, he told this to his abbot. He said, 'Go and sit down, and entrust your body to your

cell, as a man puts a precious possession into a safe, and do not go out of it. Then let your thoughts go where they will. Let your mind think what it likes, so long as it does not drive your body out of the cell.' (Ward, 2003:72)

7. They told this story about Agatho. He and his disciples spent a long time in building his cell. When they had finished it he lived in it, but in the first week he saw a vision which seemed harmful to him. So he said to his disciples what the Lord said to his apostles, 'Rise, let us go hence'. But the disciples were exasperated and said, 'If you meant the whole time to move from here, why did you have to work so hard and spend so long in building you a cell? People will begin to be shocked by us, and say: "Look, they are moving again, they are restless and never settle:"' When Agatho saw that they were afraid of what people would say, he said, 'Although some may be shocked, there are others who will be edified and say, "Blessed are they, for they have moved their abode for God's sake, and left all their property freely." Whoever wants to come with me, let him come; I am going anyway.' They bowed down on the ground before him, and begged to be allowed to go with him. (Ward, 2003:53-54)

8. (...) there was another monk who had settled in the further desert and had practised the virtues for many years. (...) since God held him in honour, at a prescribed time every two or three days he made a loaf appear on the table, a real loaf which could be eaten. (...) He grew spiritually every day (...) But he came to be almost certain that the better portion was indeed his, as if he already had it in his grasp. And once this happened, it only needed a little time to make him fall as a result of the temptation which was to come to him afterwards. (...) when he came to this presumption he began without realizing it to think that he was superior to most men (...) Before long there was born in him first of all some small indolence, so small as not to seem indolence at all. Then there developed a more serious negligence. Then it came just perceptible. For he became more reluctant to rise from sleep and sing hymns. The work of prayer now became more sluggish. The singing of psalms was not so prolonged. The soul (...) wished to rest. The mind turned its gaze earthwards. Thoughts became subject to distractions. (...) His mind fell upon the thoughts with even greater alacrity, while his memory composed an image like that of a woman actually present and lying with him. He had the whole scene in front of his eyes as if all along he was actually performing the act. (...)The thoughts then returned in throngs, enveloping him on all sides and (...) they dragged him back to the world. (...) (Ward, 1980: 59-61)

9. (...)there was a monk (...) who lived in a cave in the nearer desert and had given proof of the strongest ascetic discipline. (...)Then the Tempter asked for him (...) and in the evening presented him the image of a beautiful woman lost in the desert (...) She told him how she had lost her way and sowed in him words of flattery and deceit. She kept on talking to him for some time, and somehow gently enticed him to fall in love with her. (...)With so much talking she led him astray. Then she began to touch his hand and beard and neck. And finally she made the ascetic her prisoner. As for him, his mind seethed with evil thoughts as he calculated that the matter was already within his grasp, and that he had the opportunity and the freedom to fulfil his pleasure. He then consented inwardly and in the end tried to unite himself with her sexually. He was frantic by now, like an excited stallion eager to mount a mare. But suddenly she gave a loud cry and vanished from his clutches, slipping away like a shadow. And the air resounded with a great peal of laughter. It was the demons who had led him astray with their deception rebuking him and calling out with a loud voice, "Whosoever exalted himself shall be abased." (...) In the morning he got up, dragging behind him the miserable experience of the night. He spent the whole day in lamentation, and then, despairing of his own salvation, which is something he should not have done, he went back to the world. (Ward, 1980:56-57)

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