

When Pain Becomes Love For God: The Non-Object Self

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Abstract : This paper shows how self-inflicted pain enabled the expression of love for God among Christian monastic ascetics in medieval central Europe. As scholars have shown, being in a state of pain leads to a change in or destruction of language, an essential feature of the self. The author argues that this transformation allows the self to transcend its boundaries as an object, even if only temporarily and in part. The epistemic achievement of love for God, a non-object, would not otherwise have been possible. To substantiate her argument, the author shows that the self's transformation into a non-object enables the imitation of God: not solely in the sense of imitatio Christi, of physical and visual representations of God incarnate in the flesh of His son Christ, but also in the sense of the self's experience of being a non-object, just like God, the target of the self's love.

Keywords : love for God , pain, philosophy, religion

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