

CHAPTER 8

Paradise Lost/Regained

Healing the Monastic Self in the Coenobium of Dorotheus of Gaza

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Abstract

This chapter deals with the construction of Christian identity in the instructions given by Dorotheus (6th century CE) to his brothers in a monastery near Gaza. It focuses on the link between good or bad health and religious selfhood in Dorotheus' monastic anthropology. In Dorotheus' view, Christian identity is beset by the experience of loss because since Adam's fall, human existence has been riddled with unnatural passions which prevent reunion with God. The only way to regain one's own nature – that is, original identity – is habituation to a truly Christian, i.e. ascetic, life. The chapter examines Dorotheus' rhetoric of healing against the backdrop of Stoic philosophy and ancient medical theorisation in order to show that he sets out a detailed programme of rebuilding Christian identity. Its ultimate goal is to restore,

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through ascetic exercises, both spiritual and physical, the integrity of the human being. It is argued that the medical conceptualisation helps Dorotheus to shape the embodied ascetic self.

Keywords: Dorotheus of Gaza, asceticism, monasticism, illness, medical theory, philosophy

Religious Identity and the Human Body in Late Antiquity

A person's identity is inconceivable without the physicality of the human body. What someone believes to be or is perceived by others to be crucially depends not only on the individual's character but also on the constitution, shape and features of their body, not least on its physical integrity. People who are suffering from unbearable pains or sickness over an extended period, like the Greek orators Aelius Aristides (117–c. 180) and Libanius (314–393), will inevitably define themselves through their condition and make affliction and the symptoms of their diseases a building block of their self-image.¹ Libanius' *Autobiography*, for example, as a retrospective record of his lifelong ailments after being struck by lightning, suggests a strong link between his physical impairments and the character of his self.² Tormenting migraine, as a consequence of this incident, and gout were a heavy burden throughout his life (Libanius, *Orationes* 1.140–43, 243–47). More famously, ancient legend imagined the epic poet Homer as a blind man, whose lack of eyesight constituted his identity as a prophetic bard. And Homer himself – whatever his historical identity – in the *Odyssey* made a scar which Odysseus had received in his youth the characteristic mark by which the disguised hero was recognised by his nurse Eurycleia (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.386–490). Although from our modern perspective we tend to think of individual identity primarily in terms of personality and character traits, we should not be surprised to find personhood necessarily embedded in a physical body and, thus, determined by its condition.

The centrality of human bodies to the constitution, conceptualisation and construction of identities has, it is true, not gone unnoticed by scholars working in the fields of Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Middle Ages. It has long been noticed that corporeal matters, regimes of body movements, diet and attempts to shape the human body played a vital role in late antique Christian asceticism

and martyr cult but also in Neoplatonic conceptions of the larger-than-life philosopher.³ Christian preachers warned their congregations of the devilish pleasures located in their bodies, and tried to ban sumptuous dress, expensive perfumes and luxurious dining, in order to redirect the believers' senses from earthly concerns to the heavenly realm. Peter Brown has shown that the Christian body was subjected to a rigid sexual ethic and that bodily discipline in ancient Christianity served to define both the human person and society (Brown 1988). At the same time, male and female ascetics, through extreme mortification of their bodies, heroic disregard for physical needs and unprecedented endurance of pain, aroused the admiration of countless theologians and laypeople, so that even Roman aristocrats played with the idea of following these saintly men and women to the inhospitable desert. Generally speaking, the human body in late antique thinking became a problematic, or at least an ambivalent, issue because theologians, but also philosophers, associated it with matter, corruption and desires – that is, hardly with what they aspired to achieve. Thinkers of both Christian religion and Neoplatonic denomination considered the material and corruptible body, as opposed to the immaterial soul, an obstacle to the return to one's true self and the ascent to the divine.⁴ Following a dualistic model, the Neoplatonists expected that at death the soul would free itself from matter, which was considered evil. Such views suggested that personhood, or to put it differently, the idea of the self, its nature and its fate, was inextricably, and problematically, intertwined with the question of the physical body, to which the self was joined. The body was a site of social and symbolic meaning, which according to Christian ethics had to be reflected in specific 'technologies of the self', to borrow Michel Foucault's expression – above all in practices of sexual asceticism (see e.g. Foucault 1988).

What is rarely appreciated by modern scholars, however, is the intricate relationship between, on the one hand, good and ill health and, on the other, the conception of religious identity. One reason is that studies in Jewish, Christian, heretical and pagan identities have focused on the building of communities, the demarcation of boundaries, the flexibility of religious affiliations and conflicts between groups, while theological and philosophical theorisation of the self has rarely been brought together with these issues.⁵ Therefore, the following discussion is intended to complement research on the construction, negotiation and representation of collective religious identities with an analy-

sis of the idea of the religious self as seen within a specific Christian community. It will investigate a major strand in late antique Christian thinking on human identity, exemplified by Dorotheus of Gaza's medical conceptualisation of personhood.

Such an approach is timely because recent research has increasingly become aware of the wide-ranging engagement of ancient Christianity with medical thinking and practice. It has been maintained for some time that an emphasis on healing, the medicine of soul and body, was a key aspect of early Christianity, and Christianity has been seen as 'a healing religion *par excellence*'.⁶ Over a hundred years ago, Adolf von Harnack considered early Christianity 'a religion for the sick' and claimed that it assumed that no one was in normal health, but that men were always in a state of disability (Harnack 1904, 132). Monographs and articles have dealt with the image, prominent among the Church Fathers, of Christ as physician and have also illuminated the idea of the history of salvation as a healing process.⁷ Further studies have advanced our understanding of early Christian approaches to healthcare and, more recently, shown that ideas of medico-philosophical therapy in preaching were drinking from the sources of Galen and his colleagues.⁸ Perhaps most prominently, the imagery of disease and madness was one of the powerful missiles fired in apologetic battles at pagan enemies.⁹ In this chapter I intend to make a contribution to this burgeoning field of research by bringing together the two elements of religious self-definition and medical thinking. More precisely, I shall argue that in Eastern monasticism the medical model of health and disease was employed to convey the idea of a precarious self and to implement a programme of techniques of the self with the aim of reconstructing Christian identity. An excellent starting point for such an analysis is provided by the life and works of the 6th-century abbot Dorotheus of Gaza.¹⁰

Dorotheus of Gaza and Medical Discourse

If any Christian author was in a position to infuse Christianity with medical learning, it was arguably Dorotheus. As a young man from a family of the upper class, he attended secular schools where he read classical literature and studied rhetoric, and, we can infer, also supplemented his learning with some studies in medical writings.¹¹ In this respect, Dorotheus followed a common trend of his days, as other

men of intellectual ambitions, such as Aeneas of Gaza and Gessius, also synthesised sophistic training with a theoretical interest in medicine.¹² When he later, as a novice, joined the monastery of Seridus in the vicinity of Gaza he was granted permission to keep some books from his personal library, among them a shelf of medical works (Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* 318, 319, 326, 327). These would prove extremely valuable when he was assigned the task of running the infirmary of the coenobitic community.¹³ Thanks to the letters of the so-called 'Old Men', Barsanuphius (d. c. 545) and John, who were the spiritual authorities in Seridus' coenobium, we are fairly well informed about Dorotheus' interest in healthcare and his responsibilities in the monastic infirmary.¹⁴ There he provided care and treatment to those afflicted by maladies and wounds, presumably not only brothers but also laypeople who sought help from the monks.¹⁵ After he founded his own monastic settlement nearby, Dorotheus continued to show theoretical and practical interest in healing and healthcare; his own writings and also the anonymous *Life of Dositheus*, his favourite disciple, reflect the same pursuits, and by their abundant references to illness, wounds and healing they testify to Dorotheus' great expertise in the discipline.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, medical treatment of Dositheus' body is the culmination of the *Life*, although sadly in his case Dorotheus' prescription of a diet failed and his protégé died from an incurable sickness – a poignant reminder of the limitations of human medical knowledge. No wonder, then, that the unnamed introductory letter to his discourses likens Dorotheus to an accomplished doctor bringing his expertise to bear on the relief of everyone who was suffering.¹⁷

That the paradigm of healing greatly informed the conception of Christian salvation in both Seridus' and Dorotheus' own coenobium has recently been recognised by Kyle Schenkewitz. He points out that Dorotheus' conception of the monastic life as the acquisition of virtue is expressed through the language of health and healing, and that in this context he attributed to the human body a positive role.¹⁸ However, Schenkewitz's interest is mainly in situating Dorotheus' language of healing in the discourse of Gazan monasticism and in the central role of virtue in his spiritual teaching. Another fact relevant to our topic is that sickness, as both a concept and a medical fact, played a prominent role in the conceptualisation of the monastic life. As Andrew Crislip has argued, ascetic theory valued disease as a test sent by the devil and, therefore, a positive means of ascetic improvement.

Monks often refused treatment for their ailments because mortification of the physical body was paramount to asceticism.¹⁹ Building on these findings, the following discussion will shed fresh light on Dorotheus' understanding of human, or rather ascetic, identity through, as it were, the lens of a physician.

To begin with, the transmitted 17 discourses and 16 letters are, as mentioned, interlaced with frequent references to medical theories, bodily ailments, pains and the preparation of drugs. In one of the discourses that he addressed to the brothers of his monastery, for example, Dorotheus adduces the application of a plaster to a wound and the following development of a scar to illustrate the sensitivity of the soul to emotional stimuli from outside. Just as a healed-up wound may easily bleed again if it is only lightly hit, remembrance of wrongs, even if it has been calmed down, might be inflamed again by a slight blow (*Doctrinae* 8.94). On another occasion, he mentions the futility of drugs once they are past their best-before date or if the doctor is lacking in expertise. In order to throw into high relief the specific nature of sins, as a contrast Dorotheus draws in bodily weaknesses, for which he identifies three causes, saying 'either the medicines are old and do not work, or the doctor is inexperienced and applies one drug after another, or the patient is undisciplined and does not keep to what the doctor orders'.²⁰ These medical analogies indicate that Dorotheus used health and disease in his teachings as useful analytical tools to diagnose the monks' psychic and emotional states.

As Dorotheus' discourses very frequently draw on everyday life and its practices, the examples of wounds, diseases and healing are taken from the monks' daily experience so that the teaching on the human soul and its qualities is easier to comprehend. Popular knowledge about health and disease was, however, not the only reservoir of medical discourse available to Dorotheus. Given that he was thoroughly familiar with scripture and had studied the writings of, among others, Evagrius Ponticus (c. 345–399), Basil of Caesarea (329/330–379), Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330–390) and John Chrysostom (c. 349–407), it is hardly surprising that he makes use of biblical imagery of healing and employs medical references that already occur in earlier Christian authors.²¹ In his first programmatic lecture, on renunciation, Dorotheus in a brief outline of the history of salvation, discussing evil and sin, quotes from Jeremiah the saying 'we would heal Babylon, but she would not be healed' (Jeremiah 2:30). A couple of lines later, following

Gregory of Nazianzus, he explains that God sent his son to earth in order to remedy our sins, 'so that he healed like by like, soul by soul, flesh by flesh' (*Doctrinae* 1.3–4; see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 45.9 (PG 36.633)). Evidently, Dorotheus recognised, as had the authors of the biblical books and the Fathers, the potential of medical terminology and categories to illuminate abstract ideas, such as the passions and salvation, that were not easily accessible to the human mind.

It is apparent that Dorotheus' application of medical analogies and imagery was not based exclusively on reading. Being a shrewd practitioner himself, he sometimes deemed it appropriate to let his brothers glimpse his medical experience and profound knowledge. Familiarity with the Hippocratic humoral theory and that of human tempers may have been widespread at least among educated men. But occasionally, Dorotheus' discussion goes beyond common knowledge, for instance when, in a discourse on fasting, he not only expounds in detail the symptoms of gluttony and even differentiates between two types, using technical terminology, but cites 'secular authors' to back up his theory with scientific authorities (*Doctrinae* 15.161–62 (SC 92.450)):

Μαργαίνειν λέγεται παρὰ τοῖς ἔξω τὸ μαίνεσθαι, καὶ μάργος λέγεται ὁ μαινόμενος. Ὅταν μὲν οὖν γίνεται ἡ νόσος ἐκείνη καὶ ἡ μανία τινὶ περὶ τὸ πληροῦσθαι τὴν γαστέρα, τότε λέγεται γαστριμαργία παρὰ τὸ μαργαίνειν, ὃ ἐστὶ μαίνεσθαι, τὴν γαστέρα. Ὅταν δὲ γένηται περὶ μόνην τὴν ἡδονὴν τοῦ λαιμοῦ, καλεῖται λαιμαργία παρὰ τὸ μαργαίνειν τὸν λαιμόν. Ταῦτα οὖν χρὴ φεύγειν μετὰ πάσης νήψεως τὸν θέλοντα καθαρθῆναι ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἑαυτοῦ. Οὐκ εἰσὶ γὰρ κατὰ χρεῖαν τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πάθος· καὶ ἐὰν ἀνάσχηται αὐτῶν, γίνονται αὐτῷ εἰς ἁμαρτίαν.

Margainein, according to the profane authors, means to rage furiously, and *margos* is the name given to the person who is mad. When this disease or mania of filling the belly comes upon a person, it is called *gastrimargia*, because of the stomach's raging, that is, being mad. When, however, it is for the pleasure of the palate alone, then it is called *laimargia*, because of the madness of the palate. These conditions must be avoided with greatest vigilance by the man who wants to be purified from his sins. They do not pertain to the needs of the body, but to passion; and if one tolerates them, they become sin.

What this passage suggests is that in his lectures on the ascetic core virtues Dorotheus, apart from imparting spiritual knowledge, aims to raise his brothers' awareness of the vices and virtues being situated in the human body, their embodiment. Instead of a neat separation of body and soul, there is an interconnectedness between the two, with passions being translated into practices of the body.²² This idea is also resumed at the end of the discussion, when Dorotheus insists that the abstention from sin must be undertaken in the same way as the strict dietary regime.²³ Since desires and sins are encapsulated, and continuously reinforced, by bodily routines, the person who wants to become a virtuous Christian, needs not only to control their mind but also to extend this strict regime to the tongue, the eyes, the limbs and so forth. Dorotheus' numerous references to disease and healing indicate that in order to cultivate the ascetic lifestyle it is essential to consider humans as entities comprised of both body and soul. Without understanding of how the human body works one cannot hope to protect the soul's health.

We can also infer the extent to which the medical point of view informed Dorotheus' instruction in the monastery from a passage which programmatically sets out his idea of the monastic community. There he draws on the notion of the human organism, so frequently used by ancient philosophy and literature as a suitable image for the connectivity of interrelated elements, for instance in political states (see Lüdemann 2007, 168–82). Showing love and supporting one another, Dorotheus explains through an analogy, is like taking care of one's own limbs: if someone sustains a wound to one of their body parts, they will not despise it or cut off the infected part but clean and purge it and apply a dressing. As this person does everything to return to health, so the monastics are to consider and do everything they can in order to help themselves and their neighbours. The reason is that, according to the apostle, we all are as one body: if one part is suffering, all the other parts suffer likewise (cf. Romans 12:5 and I Corinthians 12:26). In similar vein, the coenobium is conceived as a human body, with the supervisors being the head and the other members matching the single body organs. As encapsulated in the traditional metaphor of the human organism, the interdependent limbs guarantee the proper functioning and health of the whole.²⁴

Passions and the Monastic Life

It has already become clear from the examples quoted above that Dorotheus' discourses have a practical focus and deal mainly with Christian ethics, in particular with the eradication of passions and the cultivation of ascetic virtues. The topics on which he gave 'lectures' to the members of his community included humility, fear of God and the right way to travel the road of God.²⁵ In all his talks, Dorotheus emphasises the great harm done to the human soul by passions once they have evolved into firm dispositions. Negative emotions such as anger, envy and arrogance are according to him the most serious dangers to a virtuous Christian life. Humans are always engulfed by temptations and emotional stimuli that provoke passionate responses, so that the affected person is driven out of the desired state of mental tranquility (see, for example, *Doctrinae* 10.106, 108, 112, 11.122; cf. Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2006, 142–43). What makes the passions so treacherous is their almost imperceptible and gradual invasion. They start as a small spine that pierces the soul but if they occur repeatedly, they take root there and become a disposition. So the first onset of a psychic affect, for instance the initial flare-up of anger, might not be taken seriously enough because it seems to abate very quickly. However, as Dorotheus explains, with time, as the stimuli and responses accumulate, the person develops a stable *hexis* for the particular passion, like irascibility, until it has become a fixed feature of the soul. It is a process of gradual habituation leading to a sinful disposition, which Dorotheus on one occasion illustrates with a kleptomaniac brother whom he tried to dissuade from his vice but who was totally dominated by his obsessive desire for others' possessions.²⁶ Someone with a disposition for anger, envy, greed and other passions, this episode shows, is enslaved to sin and needs the support of spiritual mentors to get away from it. With his notion of *hexis*, the firm psychic state or condition, Dorotheus stands evidently in the tradition of classical philosophical ethics, in particular of the Peripatetics, according to whom ethical virtue is a *hexis*, a tendency or disposition, induced by habits, to have appropriate feelings, or negatively, the defective states of character are *hexeis* – that is, the tendency to have inappropriate feelings.²⁷

Life in the monastery is, therefore, a constant uphill struggle that requires hard work and unceasing vigilance. In his talk about vigilance Dorotheus explains that there are three possible states in a human

being: either one gives in to passions, or one restrains them, or one eradicates them. With the example of vainglory, which befalls the denizens of a coenobium as much as people in the secular world, he makes it clear that everyone, as a first step towards virtue, needs to examine himself and become clear where they stand in terms of these three states. In much detail, the talk discusses how a brother might deal with his love of reputation and with verbal abuse by others, and what the effects on the soul will look like. Having acknowledged one's own state of mind, it is necessary to strive, with God's help, for the complete uprooting of the passions, or in any event for curbing them lest they translate into sinful action (10.108–12).

The fight against the tyranny of sin can succeed only if the brothers make every effort to cultivate Christian virtues as powerful antidotes against the passions. Drawing on the Aristotelian theory of virtue as a middle between lack and excess, Dorotheus instructs his brothers that they must, like the saints before them, avoid negligence and instead train themselves night and day to acquire virtue so as not to deviate from the royal road leading to the saintly life (*Doctrinae* 10.106–07; cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 2.2, 1104a; 2.6–7, 1107a–b). Pride of place among the virtues that need to be trained is given in Dorotheus' monastery to obedience. Already Barsanuphius and John in Seridus' community had put a high premium on cutting off one's own will and observing strict obedience as a pathway to the truly ascetic life.²⁸ In this respect Dorotheus followed his masters as he, too, made humility and obedience the bedrock of his ascetic ideology (esp. *Doctrinae* 2). Only if the monk learns to banish his own will and always to follow the advice and precepts of the elders will he finally be able to shrug off his sinful thoughts and inclinations. This is neatly encapsulated, also with reference to illness, in the *Life of Dositheus*, when Dositheus, even in the grip of a fatal disease, refuses a treatment known to him because Abba Dorotheus had not thought of it (*Life of Dositheus* 9).

Although Dorotheus is not ashamed to employ the classical theory of virtue as a middle, his ethics is, of course, firmly embedded in the framework of Christian ethics.²⁹ This becomes particularly clear in his first discourse, on renunciation, which places his anthropology in the wider context of the history of salvation. Any Christian ethical thinker had to tackle the thorny question of how evil came into the world, since the ever-gracious God by no means created it alongside the good. To outline his view of the origin of vice and evil, Dorotheus reminds

his brothers of Adam's creation and fall, and the subsequent attempts of God to bring humankind back to the path of salvation (*Doctrinae* 1.1–9; cf. Pauli 1998, 63–66; Schenkewitz 2016, 64–66). One striking feature of his account is the emphasis on nature: in paradise, he tells his brothers, man lived according to nature, in command of all his senses and in possession of every virtue. In other words, man in his original state demonstrated that he was created in the image of the creator. It was only when the first humans ignored God's order not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and subsequently were banned from paradise, that they lost the innocence and integrity given to them by God. The consequences were devastating, as Dorotheus makes clear (*Doctrinae* 1.1 (SC 92.146–48)):

Ὅτε δὲ παρέβη τὴν ἐντολὴν καὶ ἔφαγεν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου οὗ ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ ὁ Θεὸς μὴ φαγεῖν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, τότε ἐξεβλήθη τοῦ παραδείσου· ἐξέπεσε γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ παρὰ φύσιν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ, ἐν τῇ φιλοδοξίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ τοῦ βίου τούτου καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάθεσι, κατακυριευόμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν· κατεδούλωσε γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως.

When he disobeyed the command and ate of the tree that God commanded him not to eat of, he was thrown out of paradise. He fell from a state *in accord with his nature* and was in a state *contrary to nature*, i.e. in sin, ambition, a love of the pleasures of this life and the other passions; and he was mastered by them and became a slave to them through his transgression.

However, all was not lost because God, in the greatness of his pity, gave the commandments as a means of return to the paradisiacal condition. At last, in his love for humankind God sent his only begotten Son to renew man in his nature and restore the depraved senses to what they had been in the beginning (1.4).

Considering the prominence of φύσις, 'nature', in Dorotheus' account, it is safe to say that he conceptualises human existence in the Garden of Eden and the following downfall in terms of identity.³⁰ From the beginning of his existence, man is defined by his being an image of God – that is, totally good, virtuous and equipped with unimpaired senses.³¹ This is what makes man, gives him his dignity and distinguishes his being from that of other living creatures. Sin, by contrast,

is a product of a depraved nature.³² Elsewhere, Dorotheus expounds in more detail that man is created the image of God (κατ' εἰκόνα) insofar as his soul is incorruptible and self-determining, while he is made God's likeness (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) insofar as he practises virtue.³³ Therefore, the life in sin is, as Dorotheus points out, contrary to nature and, thus, a violation of man's original identity. This discussion indicates that Dorotheus considers Christian identity primarily as moral nature or man's capacity to act morally.

Although man, through original sin, has not forfeited his being the image of the creator, he has lost his likeness to God in spirit because he has acted in contravention of his created nature. To put it differently, we may say that the sinful man is in a state of alienation, virtually having a 'dissociated self', as he has abandoned his true being. Everything that has happened since the ban from paradise is considered a step towards the return to the natural state of man as the *imago Dei* and unity with God (*Doctrinae* 1.9–10). Consequently, the entire programme of acquisition of, and habituation in, ascetic virtues which unfolds in Dorotheus' lectures should be seen as an attempt to complete this return to human identity, with the eyes fixed on the saints and the Fathers, and under the guidance of the elders (see e.g. *Doctrinae* 1.10–14, 16.171). The Christian ascetic is to reunite as far as possible his empirical existence in this world with his original nature. Two features of Dorotheus' conception of personhood merit attention. First, identity is a relational concept, insofar as man is defined through his likeness to God; this quality renders identity an obligation, an ideal to be aspired to, rather than a stable possession. Second, and following from this fact, human identity is inherently precarious and processual because it is, on the one hand, intertwined with the original sin and, on the other, a quality that constantly needs to be sought in a struggle against human weakness.

Healing the Monastic Self

This is the point where the discourse of healing comes into the game. We have already mentioned that in his opening discourse, Dorotheus adopts the traditional image of Christ as a healer.³⁴ As Gregory of Nazianzus, whom he quotes, said, the Saviour came to humankind in order to heal like by like, both the soul and the flesh. The reason that Dorotheus draws on references to healing in the Bible and the Fathers

is his conception of the passions. Passions, according to him, start as small, barely noticeable symptoms, then gain momentum, and finally come to be entrenched so firmly that the soul is thrown into fetters by them. In this regard, they closely resemble diseases. Dorotheus details this idea in *Discourse* 11, which he begins with an account of how he recently found a brother sick with a fever: at first it is just a minute, circumscribed irregularity which the affected person regards as nothing, but then it has room to grow strong, while the person ignores the physical signs, until the ailing body requires hard work and time to regain its health. The same applies to the soul once even a small sin has been committed. How much time and toil does it take, Dorotheus exclaims, to correct oneself!

Οὕτως ἐστὶ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς· μικρὸν ἀμαρτάνει τις, καὶ ποιεῖ πόσον χρόνον στάζων τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ, πρὶν διορθώσῃται ἑαυτόν. Καὶ ἐπὶ μὲν τῆς σωματικῆς ἀσθενείας εὐρίσκομεν διαφόρους αἰτίας, ἢ ὅτι τὰ φάρμακα παλαιὰ ὄντα οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἱατρὸς ἄπειρός ἐστι καὶ ἄλλο ἀντ' ἄλλου φάρμακον παρέχει, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἄρρωστος ἀτακτεῖ καὶ οὐ φυλάττει ἃ ἐπιτάσσεται παρὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐχ οὕτως· οὐ γὰρ δυνάμεθα εἰπεῖν ὅτι ὁ ἱατρὸς ἄπειρος ὢν οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἀρμόδια τὰ φάρμακα. Ὁ Χριστὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἱατρὸς τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν, καὶ πάντα γινώσκει καὶ ἀρμόδιον ἐκάστῳ πάθει παρέχει τὸ φάρμακον· οἷόν τι λέγω· Τῇ κενοδοξίᾳ τὰς περὶ ταπεινοφροσύνης ἐντολάς, τῇ φιληδονίᾳ τὰς περὶ ἐγκρατείας, τῇ φιλαργυρίᾳ τὰς περὶ ἐλεημοσύνης, καὶ ἅπαξ ἀπλῶς ἕκαστον πάθος ἔχει φάρμακον τὴν ἀρμόζουσαν αὐτῷ ἐντολήν· ὥστε ὁ ἱατρὸς οὐκ ἔστιν ἄπειρος.

So it is with the soul: someone commits a little sin and what a long time he goes on dripping blood before he corrects himself! For bodily weakness we find there are different causes: either the medicines are old and do not work, or the doctor is inexperienced and applies one drug after another, or the patient is undisciplined and does not keep to what the doctor orders. With the soul it is not so; for we cannot say that the doctor is inexperienced and has not given the appropriate medicine. Christ is the doctor of our souls; he knows everything and provides the fitting drug for every illness. For example: for vainglory, the commandments about humility; for love of pleasure, those about temperance; for avarice, those about almsgiving. In short, each disease has a fitting com-

mandment as remedy, so that the doctor is not inexperienced. (*Doctrinae* 11.113 (SC 92.356–58))

Here and elsewhere, Dorotheus spells out the idea that passions are diseases of the human soul. Just as according to the medical profession a disease is a disorder and an unnatural condition of the body, so negative emotions ruin the natural order and healthy condition of the soul (10.106). When we are tormented by psychic affects, our soul, like an affected body, feels pain inflicted by the passions, which are burning it up.³⁵ The interpretative framework for an accurate understanding of the nature of the passions is provided by the medical paradigm (*Doctrinae* 11.122 (SC 92.374)):

Ὅτι ἡ μὲν ἀρετὴ φυσικὴ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστίν. Ἀνεξάλειπτα γὰρ τὰ σπέρματα τῆς ἀρετῆς. Εἶπον οὖν ὅτι ὅσον ἐνεργοῦμεν τὰ καλὰ, ἐν ἔξει τῆς ἀρετῆς γινόμεθα, τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὴν ἰδίαν ἔξιν ἀναλαμβάνομεν, εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ὑγίαν ἐπανερχόμεθα, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ ὀφθαλμίας ἐπὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον φῶς, ἢ ἀπὸ ἄλλης οἷας δῆποτε ἀρρωστίας ἐπὶ τὴν ἰδίαν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ὑγίαν. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς κακίας, οὐχ οὕτως· ἀλλὰ ξένην τινὰ καὶ παρὰ φύσιν λαμβάνομεν ἔξιν διὰ τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ κακοῦ· οἰονεῖ, ἐν ἔξει λοιμώδους τινὸς ἀρρωστίας γινόμεθα, ἵνα μὴτε δυνάμεθα ἔτι ὑγιᾶναι ἄνευ πολλῆς βοήθειας καὶ πολλῶν εὐχῶν καὶ πολλῶν δακρῶν δυναμένων κινῆσαι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς τοὺς οἰκτιρμούς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὡσπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς σωματικοῖς εὕρισκομεν.

For virtue belongs to nature and is within us; the seeds of virtue are ineradicable. I said, therefore, that insofar as we carry out what is good, we acquire a habit of virtue – that is, we take up a state proper to us, we return to a state of health which belongs to us, as from an eye disease we return to our natural eyesight, or from any other state of weakness, we return to the natural state of health which belongs to us. In the case of vice, it is not so; by doing what is evil, we acquire a habit which is foreign to us and contrary to nature. We put ourselves, as it were, into a permanent state of pestilential sickness, so that we can no longer be healed without much help, many prayers and many tears, which have the power to attract Christ's compassion to us. We find the same sort of thing in bodily sickness.

The notions of health and disease here help Dorotheus to diagnose the symptoms of virtue and vice. As the expressions ‘belongs to us’, ‘natural’, and the opposites ‘foreign’ and ‘contrary to nature’ suggest, he regards the habituation of virtuous and sinful dispositions as a process of regaining one’s original state or natural identity and, conversely, dissociating oneself from one’s true being. Moreover, the references to the repeated enactment of evil (ἐνέργεια) and the medical analogies demonstrate that from Dorotheus’ therapeutic viewpoint, moral identity cannot be located simply in the human soul but rather, through practices, extends through the human being as a continuum of body and soul. Elsewhere, Dorotheus suggests that ascetic virtue is engendered and cultivated by veritable physical labour, which again underlines the inextricability of *sōma* and *psyche*.³⁶ This view is based on the idea that it is through the body that the soul can escape the passions, because the body is a place where the soul can be nurtured and receives the solidarity of others in the struggle against the passions. When, by contrast, the soul departs from the body and is left alone with the passions, it is always consumed by them so that it can no longer think of God (*Doctrinae* 12.126; cf. Evagrius Ponticus, *Kephalaia Gnostica* 4.82 (PO 28.1, 172); see Schenkewitz 2016, 130).

His views on bodily labours as a catalyst for ascetic virtues, in particular humility, raise a more general question, namely that of how bodily practices and embodied habits can affect the soul. Here again it is illuminating to consider the medical background to Dorotheus’ theory (see Champion 2019). Galen emphasised that the mortal part of the soul was the ‘blend of the body’³⁷ and, following Plato, held the view that, alongside studies, practices of the body could engender psychic virtues and vices (Galen, *Quod animi mores* 71.11–73.20; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 87b3–6; see Sorabji 2000, 253–60). According to him, the consumption of food and wine, gymnastic exercises, training in music, and further practices were instrumental in removing vice and generating virtue. In similar vein, Dorotheus assumes that the soul is sympathetically affected in tandem with the body. He also seems to deliberately use medical terms, ‘to be affected sympathetically’ and ‘to be in the same condition’ (συμπάσχει καὶ συνδιατίθεται), to explain how physical labour operates in generating the psychic disposition of humility. It therefore seems plausible that he borrowed from medical theory in order to formulate his views on the fundamental mind–body unity as the foundation of his anthropology.³⁸

The idea of *pathē* as diseases of the soul was widespread in ancient philosophy and had also been adopted by the Stoics, for instance by Chrysippus.³⁹ Furthermore, Christian authors, among them Clement of Alexandria and the Cappadocians, who were imbued with philosophical and medical learning, integrated this idea in their theory of the passions.⁴⁰ While Dorotheus could have learned the conception of passion as disease also from earlier Christian writers who drew on Stoic thinking, we can surmise that he likewise came across such ideas as a young student when he attended the classes of the grammarian and the sophist. However, the link between ethics and medicine in Dorotheus' anthropology is not limited to the medical conceptualisation of the passions. More than that, passions are likely to have a direct impact on the human body. In *Discourse 1*, Dorotheus directs his audience's attention to the distinction between passions and sins: passions are defined as emotional impulses like anger, vainglory, hatred and bad desire – in general, as we just have seen, as disorder of the soul. Sins, by contrast, are seen as the passions put into practice – that is, when a person acts and brings into corporeal reality the works that have been suggested by the passions.⁴¹ Thus, Dorotheus argues that sins are the corporeal enactments (ἐνέργειαι) of the passions, the bodily manifestations, which, as mentioned above, through repetition generate a firm disposition in the soul (see above, p. 192). There is, then, a kind of soul–body continuum, with the body being used as an instrument to gratify the bad desires. This thinking also might have led Dorotheus to adopt the analogy of diseases, because in committing a sinful deed, a human being performs practices of the body that are clearly against nature, in the same way that an illness indicates a disorder of the natural state.

Against the backdrop of the medical understanding of the passions, it is only natural that Dorotheus conceives of the return to the paradisiacal state too in terms of the healing profession. As we can infer from the frequent references to doctors and medication, the monk on whom a wound is inflicted by the passions cannot be cured by himself alone but is in need of an expert in healing. The decisive factor in the healing process was that God sent his only begotten Son as a doctor. Christ became human and renewed us in our nature, freeing us from the tyranny of sin. Yet, being fully aware of our weakness and anticipating that even after baptism we are prone to sinful actions, God gave the commandments in order to purge us of sins and also of the passions.

Dorotheus makes clear that the application of the commandments as drugs also requires insight on the patient's part. God, he says, tells us why we despise and disobey his commandments and, thus, 'provides the medicine for this, so that we are able to obey and be saved'.⁴²

The most powerful antidote against the passions, and that which is the bedrock of Dorotheus' asceticism, is the virtue of humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη). Since humanity has fallen because of arrogance and self-confidence, it is possible to be cured only through the opposite: strict humility (1.7). We can hardly fail to notice that Dorotheus owed the idea of healing through opposites to Hippocratic medicine, which had posited the principle *contraria contrariis curantur*.⁴³ Although the programme of a return to one's natural condition through the use of medicine is fundamental to Dorotheus' ethics in general, it is particularly aligned with his vision of the monastic life. A couple of paragraphs after his outline of the commandments' cure, he not only specifically addresses the passions and sins to be found among coenobitic monks but holds up as role models the saints Antony and Pachomius, as well as other Fathers who cut off their passions and purified their souls. Withdrawing from the world, they found the virtuous life in a monastic existence (1.11). Dorotheus then proceeds to expound in much detail how the archetypal anchorites made God's commandments the central pillar of their unique lifestyle and highlights the vital role played in the ascetic programme by self-mortification. The saintly men's life is again presented as a healing process, as they, through strict obedience to the commandments, purified the soul and also the mind, so that it regained the power of sight and returned to its natural condition (cf. *Doctrinae* 11.122). Finally, this model is applied to Dorotheus' own community, mainly in an illuminating allegorical interpretation of the monks' habit, which explains the symbolic meaning of its sleeves, belt and other features. The bottom line of his argument is that the healing process that culminates in tranquillity and a dispassionate condition can be achieved only through complete abnegation of one's own will, that is, through utter humility.⁴⁴

To engender the ascetic virtues, Dorotheus devises a number of therapeutic strategies, spiritual exercises that were the mainstay of the monastic life in general.⁴⁵ Similarly to classical philosophers, he instructs his brothers in continuous techniques of the self, including meditation, examination of one's conscience and writing as a therapeutic strategy.⁴⁶ The aim was to heighten attention to the self and, thereby,

make progress in spiritual perfection, and attain peace of mind. At first glance, it seems that Dorotheus' medico-philosophical therapy of the soul assigns to suffering and malady a mainly negative value. Diseases of the soul appear as unnatural disorders that need to be remedied. And yet there are some aspects of illness and pain that do have their merits. The medical treatment of diseases of the soul, it is true, consists for the most part in spiritual exercises with the main goal of purification, which are fleshed out in the course of Dorotheus' talks. Daily scrutiny of the conscience, meditation on scripture, and the Sayings of the Fathers, as well as confession of one's failures before an elder, all contribute to making progress on the path to one's natural identity. But it is likewise true that there is a place for toil and suffering too. Time and again, the discourses stress that the return to virtue is, of course, not free but requires hard work and constant effort, even bodily labour.

Particularly illuminating is a passage from the lecture on humility in which Dorotheus discusses one of the Sayings of the Fathers (*Doctrinae* 2.38–39; see *Apophthegmata Patrum*, *Anon.* 323). As the Desert Father had claimed that the path to humility could be completed only through bodily toil, the lecture addresses the question of how physical labour can lead to, or even generate, humility. When the human soul contravened God's commandments, Dorotheus argues, it fell in love with corporeal matters and thus became one with the body and totally flesh. As a result, the miserable soul was suffering in tandem with the body. This can be seen in the fact that the soul of a healthy person is in a different condition to that of a sick person. Consequently, at the same time that the body is humiliated by physical labour, the soul is humiliated too.

It is, Dorotheus points out on another occasion, a painful struggle to uproot bad habits and purify oneself from the passions (12.131–32). More than that, he acknowledges that even pain and sickness can have positive effects. When he was suffering from rheumatism in his foot, he recognised that nothing in human life occurred without God because God knew best what was good and beneficial. Dorotheus' rheumatism made him wonder about its cause and thus made him cognisant of his own possible failures (12.124). What is more important than the diagnosis of the corporeal malady is the knowledge that it is good for the soul. In a similar vein, he cites St Paul and the Prophets to make the point that even evil happens according to God's plan. What Amos is saying is:

‘Οὐκ ἔστι κακία ἐν πόλει, ἣν Κύριος οὐκ ἐποίησεν.’ Κακίαν λέγει πάντα τὰ κακωτικά, οἶονεῖ τὰ θλιβερά τὰ γινόμενα πρὸς παιδευσιν ἡμῶν διὰ τὴν κακίαν ἡμῶν, ἅτινα ἐστὶ λιμός, λοιμός, ἀβροχία, νόσοι, πόλεμοι. Ταῦτα οὐ γίνονται κατ’ εὐδοκίαν Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συγχώρησιν, συγχωροῦντος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπενεχθῆναι αὐτὰ ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.

‘There is no evil in the city which the Lord did not make’ [Amos 3:6]. He speaks of evil here in the sense of everything noxious and the troubles that are brought upon us for our correction because of the evil we do, such evils as famine, plague, droughts, diseases and wars. All this happens to us not according to God’s pleasure but by his permission; God permits them to come upon us for our profit. (*Doctrinae* 14.155 (SC 92.434–36))

Illness and pain, though not an end in themselves, serve a pedagogic function because they urge us to remedy our souls, to seek the path of virtue.⁴⁷ Diseases, as well as other evil experiences, occur by God’s permission for the sake of correction of the evil that human beings do. Nonetheless, a sick person deserves our compassion, as Dorotheus adds.⁴⁸ A similar point is made very vividly in the *Life of Dositheus*, where the protagonist attains true ascetic status only in his terminal illness, as though bodily suffering, together with strict obedience, were the crown of Christian asceticism (*Life of Dositheus* 9–11). Intriguingly, pain and sickness appear as a part, almost the core, of ascetic identity. This attitude towards illness is characteristic of the monastic movement, in which disease was seen as a positive means of ascetic improvement (Crislip 2005, 92–99; Ferngren 2009, 77). Basil of Caesarea, for example, maintained that diseases served a vital function in Christians’ lives because they indicated that the sinful soul was in need of a cure. When a person fell ill, this could be punishment for sin, but it could also be a means of correction.⁴⁹ More generally and outside a monastic context, Greek and Latin Church Fathers often valued sickness as a pedagogic instrument used by God to prevent people from committing sin (see Amundsen 1996, 137–39; Ferngren 2006, 999–1000). The ambivalence regarding ill health and suffering emerging from Dorotheus’ discourses highlights again that the identity of man as image of God, the truly virtuous life, are not things that can simply be taken for granted, nor is bodily health. In the same way that human bodies are regularly afflicted by maladies and ailments, the soul is liable to

succumb to temptations and passions, so that its health necessitates incessant care.

Conclusion

Dorotheus' ascetic programme in the coenobium near Gaza is predicated on a theology of salvation history, which is determined by Adam's fall from his created state in the Garden of Eden. Dorotheus embraces the doctrine of human depravity current in ancient Christianity:⁵⁰ with Adam's transgression, man forfeited his nature, which is encapsulated in the idea of the *imago Dei*. The original sin caused a dissociation of the self, the loss of man's true identity, because ever since, humans have been inclined to give in to their passions and put them into sinful practice. By doing so, they act contrary to nature, since the God-given human nature is identical with virtue. Consequently, humans are required to reverse the trajectory of sin in order to rebuild their identity through reunion with God, virtually to regain the lost paradise. In his boundless grace, God gave the commandments and sent his Son, so that humankind is able to prevail over the passions and enter the royal road of the Fathers. Christian personhood is thus conceived as being from the outset precarious and beset by loss or dissociation. The monastic self, according to Dorotheus' spiritual instruction, is inherently problematic and, therefore, carries a moral imperative – namely, to put one's life in the service of uprooting the passions and nurturing virtues.

In agreement with both philosophical and earlier Christian thinking, the two-way process of loss and regain is articulated in terms of medical theory. Passions are conceived of as diseases of the soul, as disorders that result in mental pain but that are also manifest in the body. From this point of view, the return to unity with God is conceptualised as a healing process administered by Christ the physician and the commandments as unsurpassed treatment. Dorotheus advocates a holistic approach which is based on the idea of the person as a composite of soul and body. Since the soul becomes totally flesh when giving in to passions and sin, the curing of the suffering person by necessity must include both parts of the human being: bodily labour, even suffering, and care for the soul complement each other to make the therapy as effective as possible. The ultimate goal is to restore, through ascetic exercises, both spiritual and physical, the integrity of the human being,

i.e. the created, natural state of body and soul. In this context, while *pathē* of the soul are evils that we must wrestle with, sickness of the body is valued as a catalyst for the return to our primordial identity.

The theology of Christian, or more precisely ascetic, identity taught in Dorotheus' monastery is informed by various traditions, among which classical medical theory and the spiritual director's own medical experience are paramount. Notions of disease, healing and therapy provided him with a conceptual framework suited to his idea of processual monastic personhood. Dorotheus' medico-philosophical theory of the self was astutely grasped by one of his later admirers, who, in the prefatory letter to the collection, stated that Dorotheus, in the footsteps of the Fathers, employed the most powerful drug (φάρμακον), the abnegation of one's will, in order to enter the straight path upwards (*Epistula ad fratrem* 2).

Notes

- 1 See Perkins (1995, 173–89) on Aristides' presentation of his self in the *Sacred Tales*.
- 2 See Libanius, *Orationes* 1.9–10. Cf. *Epistulae* 727. The accident occurred when he was twenty (in 334 CE).
- 3 For the Christian conceptualisation of the body, see Peter Brown's influential study (1988). For the body of the Neoplatonic philosopher, see the discussion of the 'anatomy of visible holiness' in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers* in Miller (2000, 247–49).
- 4 In early Christian thinking, however, matter and the material world were not inherently evil because they were part of God's creation. See Amundsen (1996, 134–35).
- 5 The section 'Identities' in Harvey and Hunter (2008, 167–279) is representative; it deals with Jews and Christians, pagans and Christians, 'Gnosticism', Manichaeism, Arius and Arianism, and Pelagius and Pelagians.
- 6 Nutton (1984, 5). See also Amundsen (1996, 127–57) on early Christian attitudes toward health, illness, suffering and medicine, and Dörnemann (2003).
- 7 Amundsen (1996, 133) and Dörnemann (2003, 58–65) on the theme of *Christus medicus*; Dysinger (2005) on medical imagery and the idea of psalmody as spiritual remedy in Evagrius Ponticus; Schenkewitz (2016) on the idea of salvation as healing in Gazan monasticism.
- 8 See Crislip (2005) and Ferngren (2009) on early Christian medicine; Mayer (2015) on John Chrysostom as medico-philosophical therapist.
- 9 See e.g. Theodoret's *Cure for Hellenic Sicknesses*, in particular his notion of therapy. Cf. Papadogiannakis (2012, 31–51).
- 10 Champion's (2022) important book on Dorotheus' ascetic education came out too late for me to fully engage with it.

- 11 Information on his biography is provided by his own works, the *Life of Dositheus* transmitted under his name, and the letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza. For what we know about Dorotheus' life, see Hevelone-Harper (2005, 61–78); Pauli (2000, 7–10). See also Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006) on Gazan monasticism, in particular 42–46 on Dorotheus. For Dorotheus' education in medicine, see Champion (2022, 48–50).
- 12 See Overwien (2018) on the so-called iatrosophists of Late Antiquity.
- 13 For early Christian hospitals and monastic infirmaries in particular, see Crislip (2005, 100–42), with the critical discussion in Ferngren (2009, 125–30).
- 14 In addition, the letters, too, apply medical discourse to the conception of Christian asceticism. See Schenkewitz (2016).
- 15 Dorotheus of Gaza, *Doctrinae* 11.121; *Life of Dositheus* 1. Dorotheus' writings, as well as the letters of Barsanuphius and John, are evidence that contact between the monks and laypeople of Gaza and the area was close and regular, so it is probable that the monks were not only approached by them in various other matters but also consulted about physical and mental suffering.
- 16 The *Life* is included in the 2001 critical edition of Dorotheus' works (*Sources chrétiennes* 92.122–45), edited by Regnault and de Préville.
- 17 *Epistula ad fratrem* 6: earlier in the letter Dorotheus is said to have employed the abnegation of one's own will as the most effective medicine for erasing the passions (2). The letter seems to originate from the 7th or 8th century and to have been extended later. See Pauli's 2000 edition *Dorotheus von Gaza: Doctrinae diversae, die geistliche Lehre*, 26–31.
- 18 Schenkewitz (2016), building on earlier observations by Pauli (1998).
- 19 Crislip (2005, 92–99). See also Ferngren (2009, 148–51), who stresses that there was no unified Christian or ascetic response totally rejecting medical treatment.
- 20 *Doctrinae* 11.113 (SC 92.356): τὰ φάρμακα παλαιὰ ὄντα οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἱατρὸς ἄπειρός ἐστι καὶ ἄλλο ἀντ' ἄλλου φάρμακον παρέχει, ἢ ὅτι ὁ ἄρρωστος ἀτακτεῖ καὶ οὐ φυλάττει ἃ ἐπιτάσσεται παρὰ τοῦ ἱατροῦ. My translations are based on Wheeler (1977).
- 21 For the sources of Dorotheus' spiritual instruction, see Pauli (2000, 35–43).
- 22 For Dorotheus' conception of the body–soul composite see Champion (2022, 52–55).
- 23 *Doctrinae* 15.164 (SC 92.454): Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν περὶ τῆς ἐγκρατείας τῆς γαστροῦ. Χρηζόμεν δὲ ὁμοίως μὴ μόνον τὴν διαίταν ἑαυτῶν φυλάττειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης ἄλλης ἁμαρτίας ἀπέχεσθαι, ἵνα ὥσπερ νηστεύομεν τῇ κοιλίᾳ, οὕτως νηστεύομεν καὶ τῇ γλώσσῃ, ἀπεχόμενοι ἀπὸ καταλαλιᾶς, ἀπὸ ψεύδους, ἀπὸ ἀργολογίας, ἀπὸ λοιδορίας, ἀπὸ ὀργῆς, ἀπὸ πάσης ἀπλῶς ἁμαρτίας γινομένης διὰ τῆς γλώσσης ...
- 24 *Doctrinae* 6.77. See also *Epistulae* 2.186, where Dorotheus advises the seniors of other monks that in correcting a brother's flaws they should cure him like a weak limb. See Champion (2022, 58–59).
- 25 See Stenger (2017) on the parallels between Dorotheus' community and the philosophical schools of Late Antiquity.
- 26 *Doctrinae* 11.121–22. For the role of habituation in the acquisition of a *hexis*, see also *Epistulae* 2.187. See Champion (2022, 173, 176–78).

- 27 Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 2.4, 1105b. See also Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.18.9.11–12 on *hexis* resulting from repeated practices.
- 28 See Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 44–45); Pauli (1998, 98–100). See also Perrone (2007) on obedience in Gazan monasticism.
- 29 For a discussion of Dorotheus' adoption of classical philosophy, see Stenger (2017).
- 30 For the role of nature in Dorotheus' thinking, see also *Doctrinae* 1.10, 10.106, 11.122.
- 31 *Doctrinae* 16.170–71. Dorotheus here follows Gregory of Nazianzus (*Orationes* 1).
- 32 See *Doctrinae* 12.134. The concept of sin as contrary to nature also appears in Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* 245.
- 33 *Doctrinae* 12.134, following Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron* 2.5 (SC 26bis). For this idea, see Volp (2006). He points out that, for example, Irenaeus of Lyon says that after the fall, man remains the image of God but loses the *homoiosis* (a closer kinship with God in spirit). Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose distinguish between a true man, who is of divine origin and will be in heavenly Jerusalem, and the empirical man, who is capable of both evil and virtuous deeds. Ferngren (2009, 101–02) argues that the doctrine of *imago Dei* provided early Christians with a novel conception of personhood in which body and soul were integrated in a manner unknown to classical philosophical thinking.
- 34 *Doctrinae* 1.4. For the familiar theme of *Christus medicus*, see Dörnemann (2003, 58–65 and *passim*) and Ferngren (2009, 30).
- 35 *Doctrinae* 12.127. The term used in 12.131 and 132 for cutting off the passions, ἐκκόπτειν (see also 10.108, 11.115, 11.117), can also be found in medical texts, e.g. Galen, *De methodo medendi* 1.7, 2.3, 6.6 (10.59.1, 10.92.3, 10.450.9 Kühn); Soranus, *Gynaeciorum libri* 4.7.7 (GMC 4, 137.19).
- 36 *Doctrinae* 12.130–37. Brown (1988, 236) has highlighted Dorotheus' idea of 'the inextricable interdependence of body and soul' as a new emphasis on the importance of the body in the monastic tradition.
- 37 κρᾶσις τοῦ σώματος; Galen, *Quod animi mores* 32.1–13 (*scripta minora* 2, ed. Müller); 44.6–8.
- 38 On the unity of soul and body in Dorotheus, see also Pauli (1998, 78–79).
- 39 Chrysippus, discussed by Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5.2 (5.432–45 Kühn, CMG 5.4.1.2, 294–304); Galen, *De priorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione* 5 (5.24 Kühn, CMG 5.4.1.1, p. 17). The analogy is already suggested by Plato, *Timaeus* 86b–87b. Cf. Nussbaum (1994, esp. chapters 9–10). See also Ahonen (2014) on the theory of the passions and the therapy of the soul in Stoicism and Galen.
- 40 For Clement of Alexandria's notion of the passions, see e.g. *Stromateis* 2.7.34.2, *Protrepticus* 11.115.2. See Dörnemann (2003, 209–13 on Basil of Caesarea, and 233–39 on Gregory of Nazianzus); Ferngren (2009, 29–30) on the body–soul analogy and the conception of passions as diseases in classical philosophy and Christian authors.
- 41 *Doctrinae* 1.5. Dorotheus here makes reference to the Aristotelian distinction between potentiality and actuality (*energeia*).
- 42 *Doctrinae* 1.7 (SC 92.156): καὶ οὕτως παρέχει ἡμῖν καὶ ταύτης τὴν ἰατρείαν, ἵνα δυνηθῶμεν ὑπακοῦσαι καὶ σωθῆναι. In *Epistulae* 2.187, addressed to super-

visors of monasteries and their disciples, Dorotheus insists that unpleasant experiences such as verbal abuse and humiliation are medical drugs (φάρμακα ἰατρικά), sent according to God's providence as a cure for the self-importance of the soul.

- 43 See, for example, Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 18.3 (ed. Jouanna), and Galen, *Ad Glauconem de methodo medendi* 1.10 (11.32 Kühn).
- 44 The brief autobiographical narrative of his own spiritual healing in the monastery of Seridus, recounted in *Doctrinae* 5.67, makes clear that it is a thoroughly transformative experience, a complete renewal: Καὶ γίνεται εὐθέως εἰς τὴν καρδίαν μου φῶς, χαρά, παράκλησις, γλυκύτης, καὶ εὕρισκομαι ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου. (SC 92.262–64)
- 45 For the importance of spiritual exercises in Gazan monasticism, see Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky (2006, 157–82).
- 46 See Hadot (1995, 135–40), who notes the parallels between spiritual exercises in Christian monasticism and in Stoic philosophy.
- 47 See also *Epistulae* 10.195. In *Doctrinae* 13.144, even temptation is said to be a cure because we are purified by the struggle against it.
- 48 *Doctrinae* 14.155. Dorotheus here stresses that negative accidents such as war, famine and illness occur not according to God's will and pleasure but by His permission. Cf. Barsanuphius and John, *Responsiones* 466.
- 49 Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 55. See Dörnemann (2003, 195–219), with further references.
- 50 See e.g. Mann (2014) on Augustine's conception of the original sin. According to Augustine, original sin is a condition including dispossession from a naturally perfect environment and the susceptibility to physical pain and bodily disorders. In the Fall, the alienation of the human person from God was evident in the disjunction between body and soul, and concomitantly, the disintegration of the body.

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