

That *conscience* and *consciousness* two words

That *conscience* and *consciousness* two words
in English are simply *conscience* in romance tongues,

that the sense derives both from *conscire*
to judge one's own acts and *synteresis*

our inborn knowledge of moral principles
that guides us to choose good over evil;

that since in its weakest sense the prefix
con- doesn't modify its adjacent noun

conscientia is merely a synonym
for 'knowledge' whence modern *consciousness*

with its concerns about how and what
consciousness knows, and *that* in a stronger sense

in which prefix and noun catalyze
each other *conscience* with its constituent

moral artistic political concerns
was once considered along with the rational

appetitive and emotional potentials
the fourth part of the quadripartite soul;

that the law of conscience once came to mean
"What I *feel* to be right *is* right";

that on the other hand *thinking* and *knowing*
— *meaning* and *knowledge* — aren't synonymous:

intellect to collect sort and compile
reason to try to make sense of it all;

that metaphysics poetics and aesthetics
what makes sense to the mind at its best

are moral matters whereby the *mot juste*
is often enough a matter of life and death

wherein authority proceeds from reason

never the reverse — philosophy

approaching the godhead with reason, the godhead
philosophy with love, as tongue in cheek

with piety and good humor Eriugena
exalting Mother Dialectic

(the skill of separating truth from falsehood
in order to control figures of speech

found in grammar and rhetoric, the other
two arts in the verbal trivium: the skill

of speaking and writing correctly and craft
of doing so persuasively — one's grammar,

the which everyone else knew as mother,
a discipline lately subsumed under ethics

embodying one's free will and decisions;
well-versed as could be in the old argument

that the most perfect language was his own
which brought together in the most coherent form

the best parts of all the tongues of Babel
(though it has still that peculiar speech habit

by which formed matter is said 'to-be');
his characteristic translinguistic punning

a sure sign of divine *hilaritas*)
instructed Charles the Bald beginning with

the nature of Nature defined at some length
by Byzantine Greeks he'd been reading

(one of the few in those days of *Graeca*
est non potest legi who still could)

— Gregorios neocaesareae
Gregorios thaumatourgos

Gregory Nazianzen Gregory
Nyssen Pseudo-Dionysios

for all their orthodoxies neoplatonist pagans
to a man: the divine name of the beautiful

the essential principle underlying being —
defining the sum total natural world

All that is and all that is not
then posing the *symbolon / mysterium*:

We may know not what but that God is
but coming to believe as Grosseteste put it

rhyming light and love half a millennium

later *All that are are lights*

skating thereby a little too close
to the pantheistic heresy for which

insight his work was twice condemned while he lived
(*Scots' porridge* the synod called his notion

that evil is not in creation but in the eye
of the creature) then again for good measure

four centuries after his untimely death
(stabbed to death so the metonymy goes

by the pens of some of his brightest students)
his legatees' bones dug up and scattered

for putting words in Albigensian mouths
wagging the aureate tongue of the troubadours

seeing the dark alight with love's intention
en route to the final solution on Montségur.