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<1984/c>	which is known. This dialectic concerning the balance of human cognitive powers in theological understanding certainly influenced the way in which the medieval mystics expressed themselves, and it is necessary to be aware of the context of argument within which they wrote. Nevertheless their aim was the expression of the experience of a knowledge which integrates human faculties, not a scholastic dissection of its separate parts, important though this is to the history of thought. It is this knowledge prompted by, and answering to, divinely inspired longing that William Langland gestures towards in Piers Plowman. Will and intellect are united in the significantly named "Will" who is also a searcher after Truth. The allegorical figure of Holy Church sets him on an inner journey as she teaches him that the object of his being is to discover a natural inward knowledge of a love for God that is greater than any other preoccupation. The poem, of epic proportions, illuminates the way in which Will arrives at such "kynde knowynge" which embraces both knowledge of himself and of the love of God. TO PLAY: INNER DISCIPLINE Whatever discussion there was about the faculties operative in mystical knowledge, there was a consensus of agreement that it was enabled by a process of inward self-discipline with recognisable stages of progress. The groundwork was concerned with the acquirement of self-control facilitated by the recognition of the emotional drives and mental preoccupations that would sidetrack the seeker after the love of God and impede his progress. One vivid account of the means by which this may be achieved is set out in Ancrene Wisse, an early Middle English text written originally for particular sisters in the late twelfth century who wanted to live as recluses dedicated to God but later adopted more widely in other such communities. It illuminates the medieval understanding of the interior life subject to impulses whose gratification may satisfy the immediate demands of the self for ease, anger, pleasure, esteem, but which also impede the freedom of the spirit to seek that ultimate good which in reality is the only means of satisfying man's inherent need for fulfilment. The key to the repressive discipline advocated in this manual of behaviour is that it is to be the means by which man is liberated from all that thwarts his true nature, just as the dancer can only use his body expressively if he trains his muscles: "those move easiest who have learnt to dance". The sisters are taught to think of those impulses that impede the spirit as sins with the strength of predatory beasts ravaging in the wilderness of the interior landscape of the fallen world. <b><u>The process of achievement of a state where the self is receptive to the love of God</u></b> is
 <p>Key: <a href="#">Footprint</a> <a href="#">ConEn1</a> <a href="#">Footprint</a> <a href="#">ConEn2</a> <a href="#">Footprint</a> <a href="#">ConEn3</a></p>	<p><b><u>that of a balancing act</u></b></p>
	. The author embodies his sense of this in the cumulative use of the verb leap to point towards the poise achieved above the abyss of self-destruction. So he calls the heart a wild beast liable to impulsive leaps out of control, a situation archetypally illustrated in the story of the Fall when Eve's eyes leapt to the apple and her heart followed and

so she leapt from Paradise to the pains of mortality and took all men with her. This inner life is projected as a theatre for the right direction of energy: the soul in temptation is ready to leap into pride, indeed the devil himself is seen as a leaper constantly alert to seize his chance to get hold of the direction of man's life. But if man is vulnerable to impulses which send him spiralling down into darkness, that very vulnerability is the means by which he can existentially know the strength whereby it can be healed and stabilised. The precarious nature of the human effort to balance is steadied by the strength of the love of God which itself leapt down into time to show it could be done. So that which makes man vulnerable to the force of the leaping devil, also opens him to the effortless strength of the leaping God which is known through the experience of inadequacy. The author sees the spiritual strength released in the sisters through their disciplined aspiration to the love of God as part of the work of that love in them; they share in the pattern of Incarnation. If the process of learning to conquer the impulses to self-gratification seems too painful to be borne, the author reminds the sisters that ultimately a complaint will seem as misguided as that of a prisoner thrown a bag of money to buy his release who moans that the bag hit and bruised him. The pain is the price of freedom: not just freedom in a spiritual kingdom after death, but realised in an inner freedom to love. The process of the recognition of the self's capacity to sin but also to engage with the strength of the leaping God which enables it to make good its losses, is ritually enacted in the sacrament of penance. The process of confession, contrition and restitution was originally instituted as a public act through which individual members of society were reconciled to each other in that social harmony signified by the kiss of peace at the Mass which was the condition for the reception of Christ at the eucharist. For the individual seeking an inner personal relationship with that God whose Incarnation enabled the socially redemptive love celebrated at the Mass, it was an interior process mediated by the priest and one formally encouraged by the Church after the Lateran Council of 1215. This