I. MEDITATIO AND REFASHIONING THE SELF IN LITERATURE, 1300–1600
In the late medieval and early modern period, the reception of texts was far from a simple and obvious business. Rather it was a complex and demanding process that required not only great concentration, a profound knowledge of pre-texts and co-texts, and advanced skills in the techniques of mnemonics (memoria), meditatio, and interpretatio (especially intertextual interpretation). The importance of this complex process for the intellectual life appears also from the special attention given to it: its goal was a deep and intense appropriation of the text, which was achieved through slow and attentive reading, both forward and backward, with a view to the careful internalization of the text; the text could also be connected to visual images, personal experiences, emotions, thoughts, pre-texts and con-texts. In this sense, the reception of texts always included meditatio and various combinations of meditatio and interpretatio. As one might expect, these processes of textual appropriation derive from a long medieval tradition and were developed first with respect to religious texts, above all the Bible – “the” text par excellence – and the Church Fathers. In the late medieval and early modern periods, the number of relevant texts substantially increased, and the well known methods of textual appropriation were more widely applied. It is abundantly clear that meditation was not limited to religious texts only. Rather, it was practised in a