

## Introduction

Peter Abelard (1079–1142) is a philosopher and theologian whose reputation has always preceded him. Indeed, to this day he remains among the best-known figures of the entire Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Although one can hardly overestimate the value of his intellectual legacy, his reputation owes at least as much to his flamboyant personality and to the sensational details of his biography. Very early on Abelard established his place as one of the most celebrated masters in Paris by challenging – and then defeating – his teachers and rivals in public disputation. In some cases, he literally drove these rivals out of business: he stole their students and set up his own schools (the first when he was only twenty-five) just down the road from them. He aroused the fiercest devotion in students, and the fiercest enmity in rivals. He also inspired the love and devotion of (some would say merely seduced) a seventeen-year-old Heloise. But when Heloise became pregnant and ran away with him to be secretly married, Abelard earned the hatred of her uncle and guardian, Fulbert, who was also the canon of Notre Dame. In fact, Fulbert's anger was so great that he hired a group of thugs to seize Abelard and have him castrated, in an effort to put a quick end to their relations. Although Abelard spent the rest of his days as a monastic – he and Heloise having taken religious vows shortly after his castration – he continued to provoke the strongest reactions among those he encountered. For example, shortly after he was elected abbot of the monastery at St. Gildas, he was forced to flee the institution in fear of his life, having aroused such hostility in his fellow monks that they actually tried to kill him! Not surprisingly, his efforts at philosophical theology produced much the same reaction. Several of his works were publicly condemned for heresy (on two separate occasions), subsequently

burned, and Abelard was excommunicated from the Church (though his excommunication was revoked shortly before his death). Obviously no attempt to assess Abelard's place in history can ignore these aspects of his life. Nonetheless, it is to his intellectual achievements that the current volume is devoted.

In philosophy, Abelard is best known for his work in language, logic, and metaphysics, which – together with the philosophical theology of Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) – represents the high point of philosophical speculation in the Latin west prior to the recovery of Aristotle in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> The fact that Abelard was writing “prior to the recovery of Aristotle” makes it difficult to situate him squarely with respect to either his predecessors or his successors, though important lines of influence can be traced in both directions. During his own lifetime, John of Salisbury claimed that Abelard alone really understood Aristotle and gave him the honorific title “Peripatetic of Pallet.”<sup>3</sup> In actuality, however, Abelard's thought draws on a number of intellectual traditions, including not only Aristotelianism, but also Platonism and Stoicism. Thus, in language and logic, Abelard emphasizes the role of propositions (rather than terms), developing a theory of propositional connectives and propositional content; in ethics, he stresses the importance of intentions, both developing the ideas of Augustine and anticipating in certain ways the work of many modern philosophers such as Kant; and in metaphysics, he initiates an influential reductive program, which comes to be known as “nominalism.” Even his provocative and controversial work in philosophical theology has a lasting influence on the development of scholastic thought, despite its being twice condemned as heretical.

It is not difficult to see why, of all the great philosophers of the Middle Ages, perhaps none appeals more than Abelard to the sensibilities of contemporary analytic philosophers. His pioneering work in areas of contemporary philosophical concern – namely, language, logic, and metaphysics – as well as his independent spirit in ethics and theology, virtually guaranteed that he would be among the first medieval thinkers to be taken up and championed within the Anglo-American philosophical tradition. As one of the first – and best – to undertake an overarching, nominalistic program in philosophy, moreover, he remains a source of insight and inspiration for many.

Over the past few decades, scholarship on Abelard has begun to flourish, and the attention now being devoted to his work is unprecedented. Even so, we are only just beginning to recover and appreciate the full significance of his thought. Most Abelardian scholarship to-date has proceeded in a piecemeal fashion, with the result that connections between the various parts of Abelard's thought have been obscured and certain aspects of his thought have been ignored altogether.<sup>4</sup> In this volume, we begin the process of rectifying this situation. The essays collected here not only survey the complete range of Abelard's thought, but also approach his thought systematically and with a kind of analytical rigor that is sometimes lacking in more historical studies. Moreover, in addition to displaying recent developments on topics already of concern to scholars, these essays highlight philosophically valuable areas of Abelard's thought that have until now been neglected, showing wherever possible precisely how Abelard's views contribute to current debates in philosophy of language, logic, metaphysics, philosophical theology, and ethics. The result, we believe, is a volume that significantly advances the current trend in Abelardian scholarship while at the same time making up for some of its deficiencies.

#### CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

Because one of our primary aims in this volume is to provide a comprehensive introduction to Abelard's thought, we have organized its essays around his most important philosophical, theological, ethical, and literary works, taking into account not only the influences that shaped their development, but also the way in which they influenced Abelard's contemporaries and successors. Thus, the volume begins (in chapter 1) with a consideration of the main historical, political, religious, and academic influences on Abelard's writings, and concludes (in chapter 10) with an examination of the influence of Abelard's work on subsequent medieval thought. The chapters falling in between address everything from his contributions to literature and poetry (chapter 2) to his writings on metaphysics (chapter 3), philosophy of language (chapter 4), logic (chapter 5), mind and cognition (chapter 6), philosophical theology (chapters 7–8), and ethics (chapter 9).

The division of the chapters of this volume is designed to reflect natural divisions within Abelard's own writings. These writings fall naturally into four categories: literary writings, dialectical writings, philosophical theology, and ethics.

### *Literary writings*

In line with the mandate of the *Cambridge Companion* series to which this volume belongs, the bulk of its essays are devoted to Abelard's *philosophical* writings. It is important to recognize, however, that Abelard's philosophical writings represent only one part of his larger *oeuvre*, which also includes a number of other works best described as *literary* in nature (such as letters, autobiography, hymns, and poetry). Abelard's most important literary writings may be listed as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. *Historia calamitatum* (= *The Story of My Misfortunes*) This work is a narrative account of Abelard's misfortunes as a philosopher and theologian over thirty years. Although autobiographical in nature, it takes the form of a letter: it is addressed to an unnamed friend, attempting to console him by inviting him to contrast his own struggles with Abelard's greater sufferings. Most of the details we know about Abelard's life derive from this work, including the account of his many confrontations with academic, political, and other rivals.
2. *Epistolae 2–8* (= *Letters 2–8*) These seven letters comprise the famous correspondence between Abelard and Heloise, and together with the *Historia calamitatum* (= *Epistola 1*), with which they typically circulated, they are perhaps the best known and most widely translated parts of Abelard's work. They include Heloise's request for, and Abelard's attempt to provide, an authoritative basis of religious life for women, as well as a monastic Rule for women.
3. *Hymnarius Paraclitensis* (= *The Paraclete Hymnary*) According to his own testimony, Abelard wrote a number of non-religious songs, but this collection comprises his extant liturgical music. The hymns in this collection were written for the Abbey of the Paraclete and intended to form a complete hymn-cycle for the liturgical year.

4. *Planctus* (= *Lamentations*) This work consists of a group of six lyrics or laments in which figures from the Old Testament protest the circumstances and injustice of their impending deaths or the deaths of those they love.
5. *Carmen ad Astralabium* (= *A Poem for Astralabe*) This work is a poem dedicated to Abelard's son, Peter Astralabe. In addition to summarizing the most important aspects of Abelard's ethics, it offers Astralabe practical advice on his studies, the nature of women, and other topics.

The importance of Abelard's literary writings – both historically and literarily – is hard to overestimate. Not only are they valuable in their own right, but they also provide unique insight into the personal and historical circumstances of one of the period's greatest minds. Because this insight sets the stage for a proper understanding of his philosophy, and has been the subject of scholarly debate for over a century, the first two chapters of the volume provide some assessment of Abelard's literary works and their relation to his philosophical writings.

Each of the first two chapters takes Abelard's *Historia* as its point of departure. In chapter 1, John Marenbon draws on it to provide a brief biographical sketch of Abelard's life and to supply a context for the proper understanding of his intellectual development. The *Historia* sheds significant light, Marenbon argues, not only on Abelard's own views, but also on their relationship to that of his predecessors. In chapter 2, Winthrop Wetherbee assesses Abelard's role as a literary artist. Here again, he argues, the *Historia* supplies the relevant context, showing Abelard to be a master of both the narrative and lyric form.

### *Dialectical writings*

If the first two chapters of the volume discuss Abelard's non-philosophical works, as well as provide the intellectual context in which his more philosophical works were written, the remaining chapters address the philosophical works themselves. Here again the chapters are organized according to natural divisions of Abelard's writings. In the case of his philosophy, these divisions correspond to three main categories: dialectic, philosophical theology, and ethics.

“Dialectic” (or “Logic”) is the name of the discipline that, together with grammar and rhetoric, comprises the *Trivium* of the ancient curriculum. As Abelard himself points out (*Dial.* 146.10–20), the early medieval study of this discipline focuses on a small number of ancient logical texts, which come to be known collectively as the “old logic” (*logica vetus*). These texts include the following: two works of Aristotle, the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*; one work by Porphyry, the *Isagoge*, which is an introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories*; and four works by Boethius, *De topicis differentiis* (= *On Topical Differences*), *De divisione* (= *On Division*), and the two treatises on categorical and hypothetical syllogisms, *De syllogismis categoricis* and *De syllogismis hypotheticis*.

Like most twelfth-century logical works, Abelard’s dialectical writings take the form of glosses or commentaries on one (or more) of the seven texts comprising the old logic. Although they follow the subject matter and arrangement of these ancient logical texts, it is important to emphasize that Abelard’s discussions in them go far beyond the analysis of authoritative texts. As with most other commentaries written during this period, Abelard’s dialectical writings provide him with an occasion to develop his own views. Indeed, Abelard’s views often emerge in his extended excurses on the text, typically triggered by some question or problem arising either in the text itself or in debates with his contemporaries.

The following works are generally regarded as Abelard’s most important dialectic writings:

1. *Logica “ingredientibus”* (= *The Logic [that begins with the words] “For beginners”*) This work – which is commonly referred to by its incipit, “*Ingredientibus*” – was intended to be a cycle of extended commentaries on the whole of the *logica vetus*. All that survives of it, however, is the commentaries on Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, Aristotle’s *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, and Boethius’s *De differentiis topicis*.<sup>6</sup> Abelard’s reputation as a nominalist derives, in large part, from the commentary on the *Isagoge* in which he defends the view that universals are words (*voces*) or names (*nomina*). This is, perhaps, the best-known and most widely translated section of his philosophical work.
2. *Dialectica* (= *Dialectic*) This work, which is missing the beginning and perhaps the end as well, is an independent treatise in logic divided into five sections: (1) Aristotle’s categories and parts

of speech, only the second part of which is extant; (2) categorical propositions and syllogisms; (3) the rules of inference or “topics”; (4) hypothetical propositions and syllogisms; and (5) division and definition.

3. *Tractatus de intellectibus* (= *A Treatise on Understandings*) This work discusses the mechanisms of cognition through a five-fold mental process: sense, imagination, thought, knowledge, and reasoning. Thought by some to be a section of the *Grammatica* – a larger work (now lost) that Abelard may have written – the *Treatise* develops and expands the theory of cognition required for Abelard’s logical and semantic views.
4. *Logica “nostrorum petitorum sociorum”* (= *The Logic [that begins with the words] “At the request of our friends”*) – also known as the *Glosulae* (= *little Glosses*) A commentary on Porphyry, generally agreed to have been composed after the *Ingredientibus* and *Dialectica*. It is sometimes thought that in this work Abelard significantly develops his account of universals beyond that initially offered in the *Ingredientibus*.

There is still considerable scholarly dispute about the chronology of Abelard’s dialectical writings. Much of the debate has focused on the relationship between the *Logica “ingredientibus”* and the *Dialectica*. Although these works constitute Abelard’s most developed logical writings, they contain what appear to be several quite different discussions of predication, propositions, mental images, and even universals. Until recently, most scholars regarded the *Ingredientibus* as the earlier of the two works.<sup>7</sup> Due to the influence of recent work by Constant Mews, however, the consensus has shifted: now the *Dialectica* is typically regarded as the earlier of the two (written between 1117 and 1121), though the *Ingredientibus* is often thought to be a fairly early work as well (completed before 1121).<sup>8</sup> A third possible view – which we find attractive – is that the *Ingredientibus*, though actually the earlier of the two works, was revised a number of times (perhaps each time Abelard taught through the logical curriculum), and hence contains in its final form many doctrines that postdate anything to be found in the *Dialectica*. On this view, the *Ingredientibus* represents Abelard’s views as they evolved over a period of time, whereas the *Dialectica* represents his attempt to produce a stand-alone textbook at a particular moment in his career.

These are not the only possible views one can take with respect to the relative dating of these two works.<sup>9</sup> But they are sufficient to indicate that the chronology of Abelard's dialectical writings has been a focus of much contemporary Abelardian scholarship, and will continue to be for some time to come.

Although Abelard thinks of his dialectical writings as dealing with issues in logic, they in fact contain his treatment of issues that we would now recognize as falling within a number of different domains, namely metaphysics, philosophy of language, logic, and philosophy of mind. Since Abelard's contributions to these areas constitute his most enduring legacy, a separate chapter of the volume is devoted to each.

In chapter 3, Peter King provides a systematic introduction to Abelard's metaphysics, discussing his nominalism – or better, *irrealism* – about such topics as universals, propositions, events, times other than the present, natural kinds, relations, wholes, absolute space, and hylomorphic composites. As King's chapter demonstrates, Abelard's nominalism, far from being merely a position on the problem of universals, is in fact a sophisticated and integrated metaphysical program. In chapter 4, Klaus Jacobi explicates the main aspects of Abelard's philosophy of language, including his views about the semantics of terms and sentences, indicating along the way how Abelard's views about language developed in the connection with standard views of the time about dialectic and grammar. In chapter 5, Christopher Martin discusses Abelard's views in logic. He focuses on Abelard's theory of entailment, which according to Martin emerges as part of an ingenious attempt to unify certain traditional views about topical differences and conditional or hypothetical sentences. Finally, in chapter 6, Kevin Guilfooy presents and explains Abelard's views in philosophy of mind and cognition, arguing that these views play an important role in the development of Abelard's dialectical views in general, and hence deserve more attention than they have previously received.

### *Philosophical theology*

During his own lifetime, Abelard was a much-sought-after master in the area of dialectic. His writings about language, logic, and metaphysics were recognized by his contemporaries as insightful and



original, and his colorful personality made him extremely popular with students. By contrast, his work in theology was not, on the whole, well received. Indeed, the same colorful personality that helps to explain his popularity in dialectic aroused the suspicion of many powerful figures in the Church, and partly accounts for his reputation as one of the period's most notorious figures.

Although Abelard composed a number of works in philosophical theology, the most important are the following:

1. *Theologia* (= *Theology*) This work occurs in three different versions: an early version, *Theologia "summi boni"* (= *The Theology [that begins with the words] "The Highest Good"*),<sup>10</sup> and two later versions, *Theologia Christiana* (= *Christian Theology*) and *Theologia "scholarium"* (= *The Theology [that begins with the words] "Among the schools"*). The first version of the *Theologia*, which was undertaken at the request of certain students who wanted an explanation of the Trinity, was condemned at the Council of Soissons in 1121. Although the embarrassment and public humiliation caused by this event was significant, Abelard continued to develop and defend his original account of the Trinity in two subsequent versions of the *Theologia* (the second of which was nearly three times the size of his original work). Despite his efforts, however, even the final version of his *Theologia* was condemned, at the Council of Sens 1140/1141, and as a result he was subsequently excommunicated (though only temporarily) from the Church.
2. *Sic et non* (= *Yes and No*) Apart from a short preface, this work consists entirely of quotations from Church fathers and other Christian authorities, organized in such a way as to provide opposing (i.e., "yes" and "no") answers to questions about important issues of theology. Although ultimately intended to serve as a textbook for students, Abelard began compiling it shortly after his first condemnation and apparently used it initially as a notebook to which he could turn for groups of quotations to illustrate points about the Trinity and Christology. The text as a whole is important for the light it sheds both on issues of debate in twelfth-century theology, as well on the development of the scholastic method of disputation, which comes to dominate the teaching and writing of philosophy and theology during the high and later Middle Ages.

3. *Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (= *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*) This is Abelard's most important work of biblical exegesis and contains an extensive discussion of the nature of human sinfulness and the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. It is also important for understanding his condemnation at Sens, since several of the nineteen heretical propositions or *capitula* that were imputed to him at this Council derive from claims that Abelard defends in this work.<sup>11</sup>

Abelard's work in philosophical theology, especially as it emerges from the writings just mentioned, has been a topic of scholarly inquiry for some time, not only among philosophers but also among historians and theologians. Since Abelard is most notorious for his views about the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement, and his general approach to philosophical theology can be illustrated by a study of these two doctrines, a separate chapter of the volume is devoted to each.

In chapter 7, Jeffrey Brower examines Abelard's treatment of the Trinity. In particular, he assesses Abelard's attempt to reconcile the view that God is an absolutely simple being with the view that God exists in three really distinct Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to Brower, the key to Abelard's solution lies in his defense of a form of numerical sameness without identity – a relation that Abelard argues must be invoked to explain not only the Trinity, but also familiar cases of material constitution.

In chapter 8, Thomas Williams examines Abelard's view of the Atonement. Williams argues that the common interpretation of Abelard's views concerning the purpose of Christ's life and death – namely, that they were intended as nothing more than an inspiring example – is mistaken. Williams's argument is important, not only because the common interpretation is part of what led to Abelard's condemnation at Sens, but also because Williams's argument locates Abelard's views on atonement in the broader context of Abelard's understanding of both original sin and divine grace.

### *Ethics*

The third and final category (besides dialectic and philosophical theology) into which Abelard's philosophical writings can be divided

is *ethics*. As in the case of so many other medieval philosophers, Abelard insists on the need to relate one's views in ethics to theology and to apply the tools of dialectic to both.

Abelard composed two important works in ethics. Both are extensive; neither is complete:

1. *Collationes* (= *Comparisons*) – also known as *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum, et Christianum* (= *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*) This work contains two dialogues, the first between a philosopher and a Jew, and the second between the philosopher and a Christian. In each case, the dialogue consists of a debate over the nature of good and evil, and the right understanding of the true path to the supreme good – the Law of Moses for the Jew, the Law of the Gospels for the Christian, and the Natural Law discoverable by reason for the philosopher. The work begins with these three men approaching Abelard, asking him to judge which of them has correctly identified the highest good and the correct path to that good. It ends, however, before Abelard presents his final judgment.
2. *Scito te ipsum* (= *Know Yourself*) – also known as *Ethica* (= *Ethics*) This work was originally intended to consist of two books, one dealing with sin and the source of moral blame, and another dealing with right action or the source of moral praise. The second book breaks off, however, after several paragraphs. Hence, the work is in fact given over almost entirely to determining the nature of sin (which Abelard identifies with consent) and its relation to volition, action, and vice.

In chapter 9, William Mann presents and evaluates Abelard's ethical theory as it emerges from these two works. Mann distinguishes Abelard's intentionalist (or "internalist") ethics from that of Augustine, and highlights its relevance to issues in contemporary moral philosophy – such as the nature of desire and intention. Mann also briefly speculates about possible Abelardian solutions to questions left unanswered by Abelard himself.

In chapter 10, Yukio Iwakuma provides a fitting conclusion to the volume by discussing Abelard's influence on later medieval philosophy. Because of his unstable relationship with the Church, and the enormous social and intellectual changes that occurred shortly after his death, Abelard's influence is difficult to trace. Iwakuma focuses,

therefore, on the area in which his influence is clearest – namely, dialectic or logic, paying special attention to his relation to the school of the so-called *Nominales*, a movement inspired by Abelard's own nominalist commitments.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

1. How many other twelfth-century monastics have so captured the popular mind as to have movies based on their life's story? See Donner 1988.
2. Prior to the twelfth century, philosophers in the Latin west had access only to a small portion of the Aristotelian corpus – namely, the logical works (most notably, *Categories* and *De interpretatione*). The information they had about other aspects of Aristotle's work, therefore, was derived from other sources, such as Boethius's commentaries.
3. *Metalogicon* 1.5.
4. For a notable exception, see Marenbon 1997a.
5. Compare the descriptions in what follows with the standard descriptions of Abelard's works in Mews 1995. In this introduction we do not intend to take a stand on the dating of Abelard's works, which remains a matter of some controversy. Cf., however, our remarks below on the relative dating of Abelard's dialectical works.
6. And in the case of the commentary on Boethius's *De differentiis topicis*, only the first part of it survives (perhaps less than a quarter of the whole).
7. See, e.g., Cousin 1836, xxxv, Geyer 1931, 605–609, Cottiaux 1932, 263–267, and Nicolau d'Olwer 1945.
8. See, e.g., Mews 1985, Marenbon 1997a, 36–93, and chapter 1 below.
9. See, e.g., de Rijk 1986, 103–108, who argues that the *Dialectica* is contemporaneous with the *Ingredientibus*, while at the same time following Mews's early dates for the *Dialectica*.
10. Also known as *De Trinitate* (= *On the Trinity*).
11. For a list of all nineteen propositions, as well as relevant discussion, see Luscombe 1969.
12. We are grateful to Susan Brower-Toland, Peter King, and John Marenbon for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this introduction.

# 1 Life, milieu, and intellectual contexts

Abelard worked against an institutional and intellectual background that was complex and various not just because of his period – before the rise of the universities regularized the structure of academic teaching and learning – but also as a result of his own character and fortune. The aim of this chapter is to examine how Abelard fitted into these contexts and, in particular, to look at how his philosophical ideas relate to those of the thinkers who immediately preceded him. It aims also to show that Abelard was a changing, developing thinker.

In the first section, “Life and works,” I give a very brief sketch of Abelard’s life, and then of his works, and try to show the main direction of his intellectual interests in a career which, as I shall argue, falls into two distinct halves. In Section II, I add a little detail to this bare account, by considering (in very roughly chronological order) the various cultural settings in which Abelard worked. Three of them are particular milieus to which he belonged: the logical schools at the beginning of the twelfth century, the world of twelfth-century monastic thinking and reform, and the Paris schools, logical and theological, of the 1130s. One is a cultural setting in rather a different sense: Abelard’s reading. In Section III, I have chosen two topics through which to examine more precisely, and very selectively, aspects of Abelard’s relation to earlier and contemporary medieval philosophers: Abelard’s nominalism, and his treatment of Plato’s idea of a World Soul. The discussions in Section II are general and aim to introduce readers both to important aspects of Abelard’s intellectual life and, more widely, to the culture and education of the twelfth century. Those in Section III are more detailed. They aim to put forward some new suggestions, and to give an idea of the sort of

evidence the historian must sift and interpret in order to understand how Abelard's thought developed within its intellectual context.

## I. LIFE AND WORKS

### *I.1 Abelard's life*

Peter Abelard was born c. 1079, the eldest son in a family of the lower gentry, at Le Pallet, near Nantes in Brittany.<sup>1</sup> He quickly showed ability and enthusiasm for intellectual life, and especially for logic. Giving up his inheritance, he first studied in the Loire area, under (perhaps among others) Roscelin, a well-known logician who had been accused of heresy by Anselm, and then in Paris, where he arrived c. 1100, under William of Champeaux, canon and Archdeacon of Notre Dame and master of the school there. Retrospectively, Abelard portrays William as having quickly turned from approval to hostility when Abelard proved himself his superior in argument, but Abelard was certainly closer, and more indebted to William than this account would suggest. Abelard quickly set up as a schoolmaster himself, first at Melun, a favored royal residence, and then nearer Paris at Corbeil (c. 1102–1104). He became ill and had to leave Paris for his native Brittany, returning to Paris only c. 1108. By this time, William of Champeaux had moved with a few followers to the hermitage of St. Victor near Paris. He still taught publicly, and Abelard attended his lectures on rhetoric, where he successfully challenged him over his theory of universals. The fame he won from this victory almost led to his holding the position of master at Notre Dame. But William's machinations forced him to set up his school first at Melun again, then c. 1110–1112, on the Mont Ste. Geneviève (regarded as separate from the city in the early twelfth century, although only half an hour's walk from Notre Dame). In 1113, Abelard decided that he should go to Laon to study biblical exegesis and Christian doctrine with Anselm of Laon, their most famous living exponent. Unimpressed by Anselm's teaching, Abelard began to offer his own lessons on the (notoriously difficult) book of Ezechiel. Anselm forbade him to continue this teaching, and Abelard returned to Paris where, at last, he was able to become master at Notre Dame.

In 1115 or 1116, Abelard began an affair with Heloise, the talented and well-read niece of Fulbert, a canon of Notre Dame (Abelard

himself was a canon of Sens, the cathedral of the archdiocese to which Paris belonged). Eventually, Fulbert discovered the liaison, and Heloise, who had become pregnant, was sent to be looked after by Abelard's family in Brittany. To make his peace with Fulbert, Abelard agreed to marry Heloise, although he stipulated that the marriage should be secret. Heloise argued against the marriage, and when Fulbert began telling people about the marriage, Heloise denied it had taken place. To protect her from her uncle, Abelard sent Heloise to the nunnery of Argenteuil, where she had been brought up; she dressed as a nun and shared the nuns' life, although she was not veiled. Most probably imagining that Abelard wished to force Heloise to become a nun and so be rid of her, Fulbert arranged (1117) for a band of men to break into Abelard's room at night and castrate him. In reaction, Abelard decided to become a monk at the monastery of St. Denis, near Paris, and insisted that Heloise become a nun at Argenteuil.

Abelard soon moved from the Abbey of St. Denis itself to a house owned by the monastery, where he continued to teach as he had done before, but adding lectures on theology to his courses on logic. (Abelard had continued the lectures on Ezechiel cut short at Laon when he returned to Paris, but there is no evidence that his teaching on Christian doctrine went beyond these.) The first product of his new interest in sacred doctrine, the *Theologia "summi boni,"* was the object of proceedings for heresy, instigated by two pupils of Anselm of Laon, which led to Abelard's being summoned, in March 1121, to the council held at Soissons before the papal legate. The council was, apparently, not convinced that there was anything heretical in the book, but Abelard's accusers managed in part to win over the legate. The *Theologia* was condemned and Abelard himself was forced to throw it into the flames. He was sentenced to perpetual confinement in a monastery other than his own, but it had apparently been agreed in advance that the sentence of imprisonment would be revoked almost immediately, and after a few days at St. Medard (a sort of monastic house of correction), he was returned to St. Denis.

Soon afterwards, Abelard angered his fellow monks and his abbot, Adam, by questioning whether their founder, St. Denis, had been bishop of Athens or – as Bede held – of Corinth. Adam accused him of insulting both the monastery and the Kingdom of France (which

had Denis as its patron saint). Abelard decided to flee the monastery, and he lodged at St. Ayoul of Provins, where the prior was a friend. Abbot Adam would not let Abelard regularize his position by allowing him to live as a monk wherever he wished, but when Adam died in March 1122 and was succeeded by Suger, Abelard managed, with the help of a powerful supporter (Stephen de Garlande, the King's chancellor), to gain permission to live "in whatever solitary place he wished," so long as he did not place himself under the obedience of any other abbot. Abelard was given a little land in Champagne, near Nogent-sur-Seine, and he built a simple oratory there, dedicated to the Trinity. He did not long remain in isolation. Pupils flocked to be taught by him in the wilderness, and the oratory, rebuilt in wood and stone and re-dedicated to the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit or Comforter), became the center of a sort of eremetical university. Abelard remained at the Paraclete for about five years, but he once again felt that he was the object of persecution, this time by two "new apostles" – probably Bernard of Clairvaux and Norbert of Xanten.

Some time between 1126 and 1128, Abelard accepted his election as Abbot of St. Gildas, in the remote Rhuys peninsula of his native Brittany. St. Gildas turned out to be a very corrupt monastery, where the monks lived with concubines and their children. Abelard, who had by now become a fervent though unconventional advocate of monastic reform, tried to make the monks live according to their Rule, and he was helped by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities. But the monks tried to murder him, he claims, and he was forced to live outside the monastery. During Abelard's period at St. Gildas, a series of events took place which put him once again in intellectual contact with his wife, Heloise. In April 1129, Suger succeeded in his plans to have the nuns, including Heloise, expelled from Argenteuil and to take over the property for St. Denis. Abelard gave the Paraclete to Heloise and the nuns who came with her, and the gift was eventually confirmed by the Pope. Heloise became abbess of what grew into a flourishing community of nuns, and Abelard helped the foundation intellectually and practically.

Lack of success at controlling the monks of St. Gildas made Abelard decide to take up public teaching again (although he would remain, officially, Abbot of St. Gildas). In 1132 or thereabouts he returned, therefore, to Paris, which by now had become the greatest intellectual center of Northern Europe. His lectures, on the Mont



Ste. Geneviève, included logic, at least until 1136, but were mainly concerned with the Bible, Christian doctrine, and ethics. Some historians believe that he stopped teaching after 1136. But it seems more probable that he continued with all except his lectures on logic until perhaps as late as 1141.

The moves that put an end to Abelard's teaching career were instigated by William of St. Thierry, a Cistercian monk and a notable (and philosophically sophisticated) theologian in his own right. He discovered what he considered to be heresies in some of Abelard's teachings, and in spring 1140 he wrote to the Bishop of Chartres and to Bernard of Clairvaux denouncing them. Another, less distinguished theologian, Thomas of Morigny, also produced at much the same time a list of Abelard's supposed heresies, perhaps at Bernard's instigation. According to his hagiographer, William of Auxerre, Bernard proceeded cautiously and according to canonical procedure, admonishing Abelard in private and persuading him to correct anything heretical in his works; only when Abelard reneged on his agreement to make the corrections, he says, did Bernard bring his accusations into the open. But there are indications that Bernard's conduct was less temperate. Abelard was faced with a campaign by Bernard and his followers to make his supposed heresies known and to have them condemned by the Pope. An important Church council at Sens was planned for 2 June 1141.<sup>2</sup> Abelard challenged Bernard either to withdraw his accusations or to make them publicly at the council. By this move, Abelard put himself into the position of the wronged party and forced Bernard to defend himself from the accusation of slander. On the eve of the council, however, Bernard called a private meeting of the assembled bishops and persuaded them to condemn, one by one, each of the heretical propositions he attributed to Abelard. When Abelard appeared at the council the next day, he was presented with a list of condemned propositions imputed to him. In order to avoid the trap Bernard had set, Abelard left the assembly, appealed to the Pope, and set off for Rome.

Although Abelard had well-placed friends in the papal entourage, his hopes that the Pope would take a different view of his case than the Council of Sens were unfounded. On 16 July, Pope Innocent II issued a bull excommunicating Abelard and his followers and imposing perpetual silence on him, and in a second document he ordered Abelard to be confined in a monastery and his books to be burned.

But Abelard was saved from the severity of this sentence by Peter the Venerable, abbot of the great monastery of Cluny. Abelard had stopped there, on his way to Rome, before the papal condemnation had reached France. Peter persuaded Abelard, who was already old by the standards of the time, and may have been suffering from cancer, to give up his journey and stay at the monastery. He managed to arrange a reconciliation with Bernard, to have the sentence of excommunication lifted, and to persuade Innocent that it was enough if Abelard, who had now given up the schools for good, remained at Cluny or under its aegis. Abelard was treated, not at all as a condemned heretic, but as a revered and wise scholar and, in his final months, spent at the Cluniac priory near Chalon-sur-Saône, as an example of a devout Christian, humbly preparing himself for death. He died on 21 April 1142.

## 1.2 *Abelard's works*

Abelard's writings divide into two main groups: those on logic, and those concerned with Christian doctrine (in the widest sense).<sup>3</sup> This division corresponds quite closely to a chronological one. The logical works were written between c. 1102 and c. 1126, the doctrinal works between c. 1120 and Abelard's death in 1142. Even the overlap is less than it may seem, because during the period from 1120 to 1126 the logical works Abelard wrote were quite short, compared both to the extensive logical texts he produced in the five or so years before 1120, and the long doctrinal works he wrote between 1120 and c. 1126.

The earliest works of Abelard (probably c. 1102–c. 1104) are almost certainly his shorter commentaries on logical texts by Porphyry, Aristotle, and Boethius.<sup>4</sup> The only other work very probably from the early period is the *Dialectica*, an exposition of the whole logical syllabus in the form of a textbook, not a commentary, but based on the lectures Abelard gave on the texts of the logical syllabus. The *Dialectica* used to be thought of as a late work, or at least to have been revised by Abelard late in his life. But now most scholars agree that it was written before about 1120, and there are strong arguments to support a dating to c. 1116 (or even perhaps a little earlier).<sup>5</sup> Shortly after his castration, and before 1120, Abelard wrote up his long commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, and Boethius's *On Topical Differentiae* – a series

of works sometimes known, from its opening, as the *Logica* “*ingredientibus*.” The development of Abelard’s thinking about the *Isagoge* over the next few years is shown by his *Glosulae super Porphyrium* (often called the *Logica* “*nostrorum petitioni sociorum*”), a short but discursive commentary on Porphyry’s text written c. 1123–c. 1126.<sup>6</sup> A short treatise, *De intellectibus*, dates from roughly the same time as the *Glosulae*:<sup>7</sup> it is based on the same or similar lectures on the *Isagoge*, but also contains some material close to Abelard’s 1118–1119 commentary on *On Interpretation*, but showing some development in Abelard’s thinking here too.

Abelard’s first doctrinal work was the *Theologia* “*summi boni*,” a treatise on the Trinity, written c. 1120 and promptly condemned at the Council of Soissons. Shortly after this council, Abelard compiled the first version of *Sic et non*, his collection of (mainly) patristic excerpts which give apparently opposite answers to important questions of Christian doctrine. By the time he left the Paraclete (c. 1126), Abelard had also produced the second version of the *Theologia*, the *Theologia Christiana*, a treatise about twice the length of the version condemned at Soissons, in which he elaborated and improved his arguments, but in no way withdrew them, and added many new features, including a lengthy paean of the ancient philosophers of Greece, their virtues and their wisdom. It was probably at St. Gildas (c. 1127–1131) that Abelard wrote his *Collationes* (often called *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*), which explores the relation between natural law and the laws of the Old and New Testaments, and the nature of the Highest Good. Abelard’s other experiment with dialogue form (perhaps from a little earlier) is a brief dialogue (= *Soliloquium*) between PA (Petrus Abaelardus) and AP (Abaelardus Petrus) on love of wisdom as love of Christ.

Abelard’s second period in Paris, from c. 1132 until perhaps 1140 or 1141, was the most productive period of his life. He had prepared his re-entry to the schools with the *Historia calamitatum* (*The Story of My Disasters*), an autobiography which provoked a reply from Heloise and so led to the famous exchange of letters between husband and wife, now monk and nun.<sup>8</sup> Abelard’s lectures on the Bible in Paris are represented by a commentary on Romans, probably written soon after his return (c. 1133–1134).<sup>9</sup> He also set about revising his *Theologia* into its final form, the *Theologia* “*scholarium*” (ready c. 1135), conciser than the *Theologia Christiana*, but extending in

its final, unfinished book to give a fuller discussion of divine omnipotence and prescience. Abelard's lectures on Christian doctrine covered a wider range of subjects, though, than even this version of the *Theologia*. After considering God and his attributes, they went on to discuss the incarnation and Christ's work, virtue, vice, sin, merit, and the sacraments. These lectures are known through three sets of lecture notes, one of them probably revised and corrected by Abelard himself.<sup>10</sup> Abelard also prepared (c. 1138–1139), but left incomplete, a monograph on ethics, sometimes called just the *Ethica*, but entitled by Abelard *Scito te ipsum* (*Know Thyself*). At the same time as he was composing works related to his teaching in Paris, Abelard was engaged in an ambitious program of writing for Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete. The exchange of letters with Heloise was completed by the provision of a *Rule* for her nuns.<sup>11</sup> Abelard answered a series of doctrinal queries put to him by Heloise (= *Problemata*), sent her a collection of sermons, many written specially for the Paraclete (= *Sermones*), and he also composed for her and her community a commentary on the Hexaemeron (= *Expositio in Hexameron*),<sup>12</sup> a hymn book (= *Hymnarius Paraclitensis*) and a set of poetic lamentations on biblical themes (= *Planctus*).<sup>13</sup>

The Council of Sens and the events surrounding it put a stop to most of Abelard's activity as a writer. He composed a long *Apologia*, defending himself against Bernard (only the beginning of it survives), and two short confessions of faith, one public (= *Confessio fidei* "Universis") and one addressed to Heloise (= *Confessio fidei ad Heloisam*). At Cluny and its dependency, Abelard seems only to have written his *Carmen ad Astralabium*, a moralizing poem addressed to his son which, despite the constraints of the form, summarizes much of Abelard's distinctive ethical thinking, especially in regard to practical morality.

### 1.3 *The pattern of Abelard's career*

As the chronology of his teaching and writings suggests, Abelard's career splits into two halves: an earlier period (up to c. 1117), when his interests were almost entirely in logic, and a later period when his main interest came increasingly to lie in questions connected with Christian doctrine. This split is sharper and more important than might be thought. Abelard has often been regarded – both by modern

scholars and by contemporary antagonists – as a logician who applied the tools of logic to Christian doctrine. On this view, Abelard can be seen as spending the second half of his career using the techniques he had developed in its first half. But, arguably, such a view fails to appreciate Abelard as a constructive thinker.<sup>14</sup> In his logical writings, Abelard did not just make some remarkable contributions to logic and semantics. He also developed a metaphysics, based on the central notion that every thing is a particular. In his doctrinal writings, he set about an ambitious project of reformulating Christian doctrine in a rationally coherent way. The project had two main strands. One consisted in showing how doctrines such as that of the Trinity are, though to an extent only, penetrable by reason, and had indeed been penetrated by the philosophers of pre-Christian times. I give an example of this thinking below (§III.2), when I discuss the treatment by Abelard and his contemporaries of Plato's World Soul. The other strand – unfortunately not treated in this chapter – consisted in the development of a wide-ranging philosophical ethics.<sup>15</sup> It is remarkable how few direct links exist between the metaphysics of Abelard's earlier career, and his thinking about Christian doctrine and ethics in the years that followed. The later doctrinal and ethical teachings do not go against his earlier metaphysics, but they do not grow out of them or even require them.

## II. CULTURAL SETTINGS

### II.1 *The logical schools c. 1095–1117*

For the first long period of his career, from when he left home to study in the 1090s until 1117, Abelard was fully engaged by a very particular area of intellectual activity, of which he quickly became an outstanding exponent. Abelard gave up his inheritance to pursue, not the life of learning in general, but a career as a logician. He sought out the best teachers – Roscelin of Compiègne and William of Champeaux – before setting up as a logic master himself.

In the twelfth century, logic (*dialectica* as it was usually called) was studied on the basis of just a handful of textbooks, most of which had already been available to medieval scholars for two or three centuries: the two Aristotelian works then known – the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* – and Porphyry's *Isagoge* (*Introduction*), along

with Boethius's *On Division* and his textbooks on categorical syllogisms, hypothetical syllogisms, and topical reasoning (with, as aids for study, Boethius's commentaries – two each on the *Isagoge* and *On Interpretation*, one on the *Categories*).<sup>16</sup> Despite the narrowness of this textual basis, a far wider range of topics was discussed than would now be included in logic. The *Categories* (and so the *Isagoge*, an introduction to the categories), raised a whole variety of metaphysical questions, while *On Interpretation* stimulated discussion about epistemology and the philosophy of mind and language.

Logic formed part of what was, in theory at least, a wider school curriculum, based on the seven liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). Although Abelard studied rhetoric (*HC* 65; Radice 1974, 60), the only art of importance to him besides logic was grammar. Grammar remained a subject for students after they had mastered the Latin language. In part, it was devoted to further study of the subtleties of Latin, on the basis of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, which also touch on many areas of semantics. Already in the eleventh century, the *Institutiones* were the object of a lengthy and philosophically important gloss (known as the *Glosulae*) which was then revised in the twelfth.<sup>17</sup> The *Glosulae* and associated grammatical texts, as much as any logical work, provide the background for some central areas of discussion in Abelard's *Dialectica* and his long commentary on *On Interpretation*, such as the semantics of verbs, the nature of predication, and the meaning of the verb "to be."<sup>18</sup>

At the turn of the twelfth century, schools were attached to cathedrals, where one of the canons would be the schoolmaster. Roscelin, for instance, taught Abelard at Loches (and perhaps Tours), where he was a canon; William of Champeaux was a canon of Notre Dame. The reputation of a school depended on that of its master. Abelard was drawn to Paris, not by the standing of the town – which did not yet have the political and cultural importance it gained in the following decades – but by William's fame as a logician. Many of Abelard's struggles and conflicts in the first fifteen years of his career were the result of his wish, eventually successful, to take over as the master at Notre Dame. As his establishment of schools at Melun, Corbeil, and on the Mont Ste. Geneviève shows, it would not have been possible for him, at that period, simply to set up another school in Paris.

How, exactly, did teaching take place in the logical schools? There are two sorts of evidence: accounts (such as that in Abelard's autobiographical *Historia calamitatum*), and the texts themselves which the schools produced. Although all teaching was centered round the exposition of the ancient textbooks, it also involved disputation. Disputations, it seems, might take place between a master and a pupil and the master might – as happened to William of Champeaux, when Abelard disputed with him – find himself forced into self-contradiction when he tried to uphold one of his positions in the face of the pupil's objections (*HC* 65; Radice 1974, 60). Even strangers could interrupt a lecture and draw the master into disputation, as a hagiographer claims that Goswin, when still a student, did to Abelard, a young but very popular teacher.<sup>19</sup> Such logical contests were acrimonious affairs, in which the challenger sought to humiliate an established figure. Abelard's successful attack cost William much of his reputation in the subject (or so Abelard maintained: *HC* 66; Radice 1974, 60). Abelard's logical contest with William may also have had links with the struggles for power at court and between leading ecclesiastics; William was an influential member of the group of people who saw themselves as reformers, and Abelard became the protégé of his greatest political enemy, Stephen de Garlande.<sup>20</sup>

The teaching of the early twelfth-century logical schools is also witnessed by a number of commentaries on the logical textbooks that have survived in manuscript (and, in a few cases, have been published),<sup>21</sup> and by other works, such as Abelard's *Dialectica* which, although in the form of a treatise, is clearly derived from Abelard's teaching.<sup>22</sup> Although the commentaries usually show signs of having been revised and polished from the original lectures, there is often evidence in them of a give-and-take in discussion, more constructive and less acrimonious than the disputations between Abelard and William or Goswin. A fascinating insight into early twelfth-century teaching methods is given by a commentary on *On Interpretation* which, although anonymous, can be clearly identified as recording lectures by Abelard from the early 1100s.<sup>23</sup> This text seems, far more than most, to record verbatim what happened at the lectures: not only comments and jokes in the vernacular, but lengthy argumentative exchanges. Logical battling with students seems to be not just an exercise for learners, but a way of thinking for the master.

## II.2 *Abelard's reading*

Until his mid-thirties, Abelard's literary culture was remarkably narrow. No doubt he had studied some literary texts and the Vulgate Bible when learning Latin, but his serious reading seems not to have stretched beyond the logical texts and Priscian. It was perhaps due to Heloise that Abelard first began to read widely outside logic.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, she was well known for her knowledge of books (*HC* 71; Radice 1974, 66: *habundantia litterarum, litteratoria scientia*) – as a woman, she would have been excluded from the mainly oral culture of the logical schools. She and Abelard clearly shared a passion for the Roman poet, Lucan, whose *Pharsalia* provide points of reference in his later exchanges with Heloise.<sup>25</sup>

It was, however, the violent ending of his marriage with Heloise which, in its repercussions, did most to change Abelard into a widely read, learned writer. When he became a monk at St. Denis, for the first time Abelard had access to an extensive library. The *Theologia "summi boni"* illustrates Abelard's new range of interests and reading. In Books II and III, a conceptual analysis of Trinitarian relations, Abelard uses his old logical skills, but also shows his understanding of Boethius's *Opuscula sacra*. In Book I, Abelard demonstrates his new learning, by assembling testimony to the Trinity, from the Bible and also, more extensively, from ancient Greek and Roman authors. From this time onwards, Abelard's thinking and writing reflected his engagement with a whole variety of ancient and patristic authors, as evidenced especially by his *Sic et non*, which he used as a scholar nowadays might use a card index, to provide learned material for his writings on theology.

In some cases, though, Abelard's interest in a patristic work was not confined to a few isolated quotations, neatly classified in *Sic et non*. Boethius, as already mentioned, was important to Abelard for his theological works as well as his logical commentaries and translations, perhaps because Boethius, more than any other late ancient writer, uses the techniques of Aristotelian logic to try to understand the Trinity. Abelard also knew Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* well. He had a particular fondness for Jerome: he sometimes presented himself as his successor in desert monasticism (see below §II.3). By about 1130 he had, with the help of his commentaries, acquired a surprising grasp of the Old Testament.<sup>26</sup> Augustine



was important to Abelard not, primarily, as a source of metaphysical ideas (as he had been to Anselm of Canterbury), but for his ethical views and analyses, his discussions about the use of reasoning, and his presentation of ancient pagan philosophy. Abelard sometimes followed closely, sometimes reacted rather violently against Augustine's moral thinking. In his efforts to justify his use of logic in theology, Abelard found that works such as Augustine's *On Order* and *On Christian Doctrine* were very useful for selective quotation (see e.g., *Coll.* 76, 96). The *City of God*, more than any other text, opened to Abelard the world of Greek and Roman civilization and, especially, ancient philosophy. Abelard generally ignored the fact that Augustine was writing to expose the failings of the ancient world, and the insufficiency of pagan philosophy, despite its grasp of some central truths about God. Rather, he used the *City of God* to provide information for the eulogy of the ancient world which he added to the *Theologia Christiana*; and in his *Collationes* it serves, among other things, as a sourcebook of ancient ethical doctrines.<sup>27</sup>

There was only a very limited range of ancient philosophical texts (other than logical ones) which Abelard, or indeed any of his contemporaries, knew: Cicero's *De inventione* which, on account of a final section on the virtues, he thought of as a treatise on ethics; late in his career Cicero's *On Friendship*;<sup>28</sup> and some Seneca. Two Platonic texts were especially important to him: Macrobius's Commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*, and Plato's own *Timaeus* translated into Latin, and commented on, by Calcidius, the only text of Plato's read widely in the medieval West. I shall return to these two works below (§III.2).

### II.3 *Abelard and monastic reform*

Abelard did not become a monk for spiritual reasons, but – as he says (*HC* 80–81; Radice 1974, 76) – through shame and confusion after his castration. And his own life as a monk was, to say the least, unsettled. Yet not long after he became a monk, Abelard became a fervent exponent of monastic reform – that is to say, of returning monastic life to the severity enjoined by St. Benedict and the other monastic fathers. He was soon rebuking his confreres for their depravities; his own school-monastery, the Paraclete, aspired to Jerome's austere ideals (his pupils there “seemed to be more like hermits than scholars”);

and his troubles as Abbot of St. Gildas came about because of his attempts to reform the monastery.<sup>29</sup> Although, politically, Abelard was targeted as an enemy by the reform party, to which William of Champeaux and St. Bernard belonged, he shared many of its ideals.<sup>30</sup>

Abelard gave intellectual expression to his enthusiasm for monastic reform in two ways. The first lay in his contributions to the monastic life of Heloise, especially the *Rule* he provided for her. The *Rule* is a remarkable and impracticable document (the nuns actually followed a different, more standard rule), and it may owe a good deal to Heloise's own suggestions. The ideal it sets is one of moderation, and its underlying principle is that the details of monastic life need to be varied depending on those who are following it: St. Benedict's prescriptions, designed for men, need to be altered in order to make a rule that is suitable for women.

Before his dealings with Heloise and her nuns, Abelard had already formulated a rather different, more extreme, and more surprising approach to monasticism, which he had in mind when he ran the Paraclete. He talks about it in Book II of the *Theologia Christiana* (and also in his *Sermon* 33). As explained above, *Theologia Christiana* includes a long section praising the virtues of the ancient Romans and Greeks. Abelard picks out, especially, the ascetic virtues of the ancient philosophers: their abstinence in diet, their sexual continence, and their contempt for material possessions. From the opening of the *Timaeus*, which refers back to the *Republic*, Abelard gained the notion that the ancient philosophers really did rule over states of the sort described by Plato, where possessions were in common and all was arranged for the common good. To him, these philosophers' cities seemed not merely to anticipate monasteries, but to establish an ideal of monastic life. The Christian monks of his day, he believed, failed shamefully to measure up to it (*TC* 2.150:630–636).

#### II.4 *Abelard and the Paris schools of the 1130s*

When Abelard returned to Paris c. 1132, he found a city that had changed enormously in the fifteen years since he had left it. No longer was it like cathedral schools elsewhere, with one schoolmaster. Masters were now allowed to teach on payment of a fee to the cathedral authorities, and so there was a proliferation of schools, both of logic and theology.<sup>31</sup> Among the teachers of logic in Paris

in the 1130s were Adam of Balsham, author of an innovative logical treatise, the *Ars disserendi*,<sup>32</sup> and Alberic, who was one of Abelard's fiercest opponents.<sup>33</sup> The theologians included Walter of Mortagne – like Abelard, also an important logician<sup>34</sup> – and nearby, at the hermitage founded by William of Champeaux, Hugh of St. Victor.

Abelard certainly gave lectures on logic, but no logical writings of his from the period survive; perhaps mere mischance, but the references to “Master Peter” by other logicians of the time suggests that he added little new thinking to his earlier courses.<sup>35</sup> Aristotle's *On Sophistical Refutations* became popular among Paris logicians from the 1130s onwards; Abelard had seen the work, but was not much interested by it.

Rather, Abelard dedicated himself to providing a systematic, comprehensive, and rational understanding of Christian doctrine. Abelard was not alone in his efforts to be systematic and comprehensive, although he certainly may have been a pioneer. At much the same time, Hugh of St. Victor was working on his comprehensive textbook, *De sacramentis*, and other systematic treatises, such as the *Sententie Anselmi* and the *Sententie divine pagine*, although probably slightly later than Abelard's, reflect the type of thinking going on in the Paris schools to which he had returned.

### III. TOPICS

#### III.1 *Universals: Abelard, Roscelin, and William of Champeaux*

In the logical teaching and writing to which he devoted the first half of his career (c. 1100–1120), Abelard also developed a metaphysics. Its central thesis, which required him to adapt much that he learned from Aristotle and Porphyry, is

(T1) Every thing is particular.

In his chapter, Peter King provides a striking and coherent interpretation, from a modern philosopher's point of view, of the metaphysical theory Abelard developed around this thesis.<sup>36</sup> Here I wish, rather, to look at the context of discussion in which Abelard arrived at (T1): late eleventh- and early twelfth-century debate over the status of universals. This debate was closely linked to the reading of Aristotle's

*Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge* – especially the passage in Porphyry's work where he asks, but does not answer, whether genera and species exist or are merely concepts; whether, if they exist, they are corporeal or incorporeal; and, if incorporeal, whether they are separated from bodies or not.<sup>37</sup> In line with these questions, the debate was especially concerned with universal substances (e.g., Animal, Man), although sometimes universal properties or accidents (e.g., Beauty, Whiteness) were also considered.

(*T1*) represents a position in the debate about universals: the view that universals are not things. In his *Logica "ingredientibus,"* Abelard combines the negative thesis of (*T1*) with the positive thesis that

(*T2*) Universals are *voces*.

A *vox* is a word or utterance. Abelard means by (*T2*) that there are no universal things signified by universal words: if we look for universals, all we can find are the words which are predicated at once of many things (such as "man" in "Socrates is a man," "Plato is a man"). And universal words are, insofar as they are considered as things, particular things, and so (*T2*) is consistent with (*T1*).

Abelard and others who held the view about universals represented by (*T1*) and (*T2*) were called *vocalists* (*vocales* or upholders of the *sententia vocum*).<sup>38</sup> How, and when, did Abelard become a vocalist? His first teacher of logic was Roscelin, who was criticized by Anselm of Canterbury for holding that a universal is merely a *flatus vocis* (the breath of air produced when a person utters something). Traditionally, Abelard's approach to universals has been seen as an inheritance from Roscelin. But the story is not so straightforward.<sup>39</sup>

First, it is important to distinguish two approaches adopted in the period that result in sentences and passages that might seem like the work of vocalists, whereas in fact the exponents of these approaches do not accept both (*T1*) and (*T2*); indeed, they are not even trying to put forward any metaphysical position at all. First, there is the linguistic approach to logic, according to which logic was devised in order to discern truth from falsehood, which can be done only through words (*voces*). Textbooks that followed this approach would skip the material of the *Categories* and *Isagoge*, and begin by considering the basic elements of a statement (*propositio*). The fact that a textbook of this sort was written by none other than William

of Champeaux, the arch-defender of realism (see below), emphasizes the distance between this approach and vocalism.<sup>40</sup>

The second approach is a new departure, although it probably derived from the first. Recent scholars have not distinguished it from vocalism.<sup>41</sup> This approach tries to follow through the idea of logic as a verbal discipline by reading the *Isagoge* and the *Categories* (and, to an extent, *De divisione*) as being about words, not things. Following the terminology of the time, I shall speak of the logicians who follow this second approach to logic as adopting the “*in voce* approach.” It is witnessed by some anonymous *Isagoge* commentaries from the late eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century,<sup>42</sup> by the *Dialectica* of Garlandus of Besançon (c. 1100) – a textbook aiming to cover the whole of logic,<sup>43</sup> and (from roughly the same time) by Abelard’s earliest *Isagoge* (*IP Isag.*), *On Division*, and (fragmentary) *Categories* commentaries. If, as seems very likely, this was the approach to logic by Rainbert of Lille and reported in a twelfth-century chronicle, then it goes back at least to c. 1088–1092.<sup>44</sup>

The immediate signs of the *in voce* approach are that Porphyry’s five predicables (genus, species, *differentia*, *proprium*, and accident) and Aristotle’s ten categories are described as words,<sup>45</sup> and the subject of the *Isagoge* is said to be “five words” (by which the commentators do not mean that Porphyry is concerned just with the five particular words for the predicables, but with genus-words – such as “animal,” species-words – such as “man,” and so on). As one of the commentators puts it, just so that there can be no doubt: “Porphyry’s intention is to treat five words, not the things signified by the words.”<sup>46</sup> In his *Dialectica* – the most thoroughgoing example of the *in voce* approach – Garlandus revealingly entitles the section dealing with the subject-matter of the *Isagoge* and the *Categories* “On non-complex words.” Although it is hard even for him not to slip into ways of writing that seem to suggest that he is really talking about things, these chapters are full of reminders that his subject-matter consists of *voces*: for instance, “an accident is that which is present and goes away, that is, that word is called ‘accident’ which comes to a substance, that is a substantive word . . .”; “. . . no substance, that is no substantial word”; “‘Quality’ is a word according to which we are said to be how we are.”<sup>47</sup>

Although the *in voce* approach treats genera and species, as discussed in the *Isagoge* as words, it would be wrong to see it as vocalist

in the sense defined at the beginning of the section. There is no reason to believe its exponents accepted (*T1*) and they may not even have accepted (*T2*). Their position concerned exegetical method: how were the statements made by Porphyry about his five predicables and by Aristotle about the Ten Categories to be understood – as statements about words or about the things signified by the words? Their decision to read them as about words does not mean that they believed that there were not, in fact, things signified by the words. If it did, they would have had to have held that there is nothing in the world but words – an absurd position, *pace* some of our own contemporaries. Two illustrations make this point clearer.

The commentary in P4a contains a whole set of arguments for understanding the *Isagoge* as being about words.<sup>48</sup> They are all based on the fact that Porphyry describes a genus as being “that which is predicated of many things”: this description fits words, not things, because things are not predicated. Contrast this approach with that of a genuine vocalist, the Abelard of the *Logica*, writing fifteen to twenty years later: he does indeed begin by briefly considering (*LI Isag.* 9:18–10:7; Spade 1994, 16–21) various authoritative statements which suggest that genera and species are things, or are words, but – because his concerns are not merely exegetical – he then turns to completely different, metaphysical arguments about what sort of things, if any, universals might be.

Abelard’s own *in voce* commentary on the *Categories* provides the second illustration. Aristotle says (4a–b) that one of the distinguishing characteristics of primary substances (e.g., Socrates, this stone) is that they can receive contrary attributes. Although Aristotle’s comment is obviously about things, Abelard insists on taking it as being about a word. Yet he has no hesitation in referring to the things signified by the word in giving his explanation (capitals indicate Aristotle’s words that are being quoted):

IT IS ABLE TO TAKE ON CONTRARIES – this is when some word takes on at different times two changeable contraries with regard to that word, in such a way that those contraries have causes which are different from the thing signified by the word which takes on those contraries – as “man” takes on “white” and “black” at different times, the causes of which, that is whiteness, blackness, are different from the thing signified by this word “man”. (*IP Cat.* 58:10–16)

Roscelin, too, seems to have practised *in voce* exegesis. A contemporary epigram suggests so vividly: "Aristotle weeps . . . over the things which have been taken away from him and labelled as words; Porphyry groans, because his reader has robbed him of things. O Roscelin! Boethius hates whoever gnaws away things!"<sup>49</sup> And in a set of notes on the *Isagoge* (P9), it is recorded that "Master Roscelin" interpreted Porphyry's remark that "accidents can be more or less" in an unmistakably *in voce* fashion: "accidental words are constructed with 'more' and 'less', that is, they enter into comparisons."<sup>50</sup>

But Roscelin seems to have done more than merely interpret *in voce*. There are clear indications that he adopted a definite metaphysical position, which included (T2). Was he not therefore a vocalist?

The most famous piece of evidence about Roscelin's views is Anselm's attack on him, in *De incarnatione Verbi* where, as well as being accused of regarding universals as *flatus vocis*, he is said not "to understand color as something other than a body" nor "a man's wisdom as something other than his soul."<sup>51</sup> Anselm might merely be drawing unintended metaphysical consequences from Roscelin's practice of *in voce* exegesis, but it seems unlikely. In any case, there is some even more revealing testimony. In his *Dialectica* (v.1, 554:37–555:9), Abelard recalls that there was "an insane view" held by his "master, Roscelin." On this view, not only species, but also parts are (merely) words, and a house, for instance, is not made up of parts. Clearly this view is not merely exegetical (as is Abelard's in his early commentary on *On Division*, where he too sometimes takes parts to be verbal: see, e.g., *IP De div.* 169:22–32), and indeed Roscelin had, according to Abelard, a series of arguments purporting to show that any assertion ascribing parts to something leads to self-contradiction. And in a fragment known as the *Sententia Magistri Petri*, Abelard attacks a view of parts and wholes which seems to be the same as that attributed to Roscelin in the *Dialectica*.<sup>52</sup>

This evidence suggests two possible interpretations. One is that Roscelin held a definite metaphysical theory and, as a result, adopted an *in voce* approach to commenting on Aristotle and Porphyry. The other is that Roscelin began as an *in voce* exegete, and at some stage well before Abelard wrote his *Dialectica*, he moved from merely following an exegetical method into propounding a definite metaphysical theory. The second alternative is the more probable, because

the metaphysical position he adopted, extreme though it was, would not have supported the *in voce* strategy of taking even Porphyry's discussion of accidents as merely about words. Roscelin, then, seems to have converted the exegetical principle of taking the predicables, categories and wholes and parts, as words into a metaphysics which regards most of them really as just words. Most, not all: he has to preserve primary substances and wholes, but these are the only items in his sparse ontology. It would, then, be misleading to describe Roscelin simply as a vocalist, since his position was so much stronger. He appears to have held, in addition to (T<sub>1</sub>) and (T<sub>2</sub>), that

(T<sub>3</sub>) Every particular is either a particular substance or a particular whole.

(T<sub>3</sub>) greatly strengthens (T<sub>1</sub>). (T<sub>1</sub>) allows there to be particular *differentiae* (for instance, the particular rationality by which I am rational), particular *propria* (the particular ability-to-laugh by which I am able to laugh), and particular accidents (the particular greyness, by which my eyes are grey). (T<sub>3</sub>) rules out the existence of all these things. (T<sub>3</sub>) also rules out parts (for example, the walls or roof of a house) from being said to exist. All that exists, given (T<sub>1</sub>) and (T<sub>3</sub>), are particular members of natural kinds (Socrates, Fido, that rose) and particular artificially made wholes (that house, this piano). Given that he held (T<sub>3</sub>) as well as (T<sub>1</sub>), Roscelin seems to have extended (T<sub>2</sub>) to

(T<sub>2</sub>\*) Universals, parts, *differentiae*, *propria*, and accidents are *voces*.<sup>53</sup>

Abelard's vocalism may have been influenced by Roscelin's extreme view, but it owed as much to the thought of the realists (those who rejected (T<sub>1</sub>) and held that some things are not particulars but universals).

The realism which had been developed by the late eleventh century derived from a certain reading of Boethius's discussion in his second commentary on the *Isagoge*; modern writers usually call it *material essence realism* (MER). Anselm of Canterbury formulated a loose version of MER (by the time of the *Monologion*: 1076).<sup>54</sup> But, in the developed form which writers such as Abelard would attack, MER is first found in a commentary on the *Isagoge* (P<sub>3</sub> – sometimes called “Pseudo-Hrabanus”) that there is very good reason to attribute to William of Champeaux. Exponents of MER are realists because they hold that all members of a species or genus have some real essence in common, by which they are (for instance)



a man or an animal. The special feature of MER is an attempt to explain Boethius's idea in his second commentary on the *Isagoge* that the same things are particulars and universals. A genus is said to be like matter and a specific *differentia* like form, so that a species is a "formed genus," and similarly a species is like matter from which the individual is made by adding accidental features. There can, therefore, be a process of stripping away, which leads from the individual to the genus. Mentally, though not in reality, the various features which distinguish Socrates from other men can be stripped away, so that just the species, man, remains, and the process can be continued, stripping away the specific *differentiae*, until the genus, animal, is left.<sup>55</sup> The earliest version of P<sub>3</sub> has both of these related ideas. "A species," says William, "is nothing other than a formed genus, and an individual nothing other than a formed species."<sup>56</sup> He also performs the stripping-away thought-experiment:

in actuality genera and species have their being in individual things (*habent esse indiuiduata*). I can, however, consider by reason the same thing which is individuated with its accidents removed from its make-up, and consider the pure, simple thing – and the thing considered in this way is the same as that which is in that individual. And so I understand it as a universal. For it does not go against nature for it to be a pure thing if it were to happen that all its accidents could be removed. But because it will never happen in actuality that any thing exists without accidents, so neither in actuality will that pure universal thing be found.<sup>57</sup>

This version of P<sub>3</sub> almost certainly pre-dates William's encountering *in voce* exegesis, and therefore Abelard's arrival in Paris in 1100: the later revision of P<sub>3</sub> discusses *in voce* exegesis explicitly and raises objections to it, whereas there is no mention of it here.<sup>58</sup>

In the *Historia calamitatum* (65:80–89), Abelard tells of how (c. 1108), when attending his lectures on rhetoric, he attacked William's view that "essentially the same whole thing is at the same time within its single individuals, which have no diversity in essence but are various only because of the multiplicity of their accidents" – a clear summary of MER. Abelard does not say what were his destructive arguments: probably they resembled those he gives against this theory in the *Logica "ingredientibus"* (*LI Isag.* 10:17–13:17; Spade 1994, 23–40). He was so successful that William had to abandon this theory and adopt another type of realism, based on the idea of

non-difference.<sup>59</sup> No doubt Abelard's own practice of *in voce* exegesis spurred him to attack William's position (and perhaps he was influenced, too, by Roscelin's extreme position, although there is no evidence that he ever adopted it himself). But, with his attack, Abelard moved from exegesis to metaphysics: he argued, so it would seem from his *Logica*, that no thing could be universal in the way William claimed. In one sense, then, vocalism proper was born when Abelard challenged and defeated William on universals. For his position to be sustainable, though, Abelard needed to add to his negative metaphysical claim (*T1*), a positive account of what does exist, and to devise a semantics to explain how sentences about universals link with reality. In order to arrive at the metaphysics that can be seen in the *Dialectica* and, slightly more developed, in the *Logica*, Abelard needed to give up the *in voce* method to reading the ancient texts and adopt a flexible method nearer to that of William of Champeaux, in which some passages are taken as about words, some as about things.<sup>60</sup> William, therefore, played a double role in the origins of vocalism: as the upholder of a view by rejecting which vocalism defined itself, and as the thinker who provided some of the basic methodological tools, without which vocalism could never have become established.

Abelard has become known, not as a *vocalist*, but as a *nominalist*. Behind this difference in label lies a change in Abelard's own position. In his *Glosulae (LNPS)*, written five or so years after the *Logica*, Abelard explicitly rejects (*T2*) – the view that universals are *voces* (without mentioning that he himself had been its best known advocate!). Rather, he says that

(*T4*) Universals are *sermones*.

The change is less sharp than it may seem. Abelard, it seems, worried that (*T2*) might be taken, over-literally, to mean that physical utterances were themselves somehow universal. The term "*sermo*" lessens the risk of such misinterpretation, because it refers to words as bearers of meaning; the word "*nomen*" has a similar semantic force, and Abelard uses this, more common word interchangeably with "*sermo*" in the *Glosulae (LNPS)*.<sup>61</sup> It is most probably from this usage that Abelard's followers came to be called the *Nominales*, and that the word "nominalist" entered the philosophical vocabulary.<sup>62</sup>

### III.2 *The World Soul, William of Conches, and the rationality of Christian faith*

Whereas Abelard's nominalism will strike modern readers as a serious philosophical theme, his thoughts about the World Soul, as discussed by Plato, Macrobius, and Boethius, may seem to be of merely antiquarian interest. Yet, in fact, this topic is hardly less central to Abelard's overall philosophical and theological project in the years 1120 to 1140, than nominalism was to his logical and metaphysical project of the years 1100 to 1120. But it requires a greater leap of historical imagination to see what was at stake.

Plato's *Timaeus* recounts, in semi-mythical terms, the making of the universe. The universe is portrayed as a living thing (30b–d), which therefore has a soul, the World Soul. The World Soul of the *Timaeus* was one of the sources to which Neoplatonists looked when they identified three "hypostases" – three levels of intelligible reality: the One, Intellect (*nous*), and Soul. The three Neoplatonic hypostases are ordered hierarchically – Intellect emanates from the One, and Soul from Intellect – and so seem not to correspond to the co-equal persons of the Christian Trinity. But it was commonplace among the Church Fathers to identify Intellect with the Son of God (his Wisdom or *logos*), and Augustine (*City of God* x, 23) even suggests that, while Plotinus subordinated Soul to the One and the Intellect, Porphyry did not and that he spoke, though in a free way, about the Trinity.

For twelfth-century thinkers, who made no distinction between Plato's doctrines and those of the Neoplatonists, the issue of whether ancient pagans knew of the Trinity crystallized around the interpretation of the World Soul. Abelard's views have two distinct phases. In the *Dialectica* (c. 1115–1116) he briefly describes Plato's teaching about a World Soul in hostile terms: he dismisses both the idea of the World Soul itself and those who, "relying too much on allegory" hold that, when he wrote of the Good, Nous (Intellect), and the World Soul, Plato was talking about the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By contrast, in the *Theologia "summi boni"* (1121; *TSB* 1.36–59; 98:348–108:633) and the two later versions of the *Theologia*, Abelard argues at length that Plato and his followers were indeed referring to the Holy Spirit, by means of what he calls *involucra* or *integumenta* (literally "coverings"), when they talked of the World

Soul, and to the Trinity when they talked of the Good, Intellect, and Soul. Misled by a dating of the *Dialectica* to the end of Abelard's life, historians used to represent the passage there as a recantation of the position held in the *Theologia*. But, given the strong evidence for dating the *Dialectica* to c. 1116 (and certainly to before 1120, and so before the earliest version of the *Theologia*), Abelard seems rather to have begun by rejecting Plato's teaching and then, when he had studied it more carefully, enthusiastically accepted it and its Christian interpretation.<sup>63</sup>

Abelard's developing view of Plato was related to the thinking of predecessors and contemporaries. In the early twelfth century, the topic was particularly important for those masters who, against the fashion of the day, kept up the grammarians' tradition of expounding the ancient classics. In his *Metalogicon*, John of Salisbury singles out two teachers who carried on this tradition; Bernard, master at Chartres at the turn of the century, and William of Conches (roughly a contemporary of Abelard, though longer living). Both of these masters made a speciality of commenting on ancient philosophical texts. Bernard wrote the earliest surviving medieval commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*.<sup>64</sup> William commented on the three main Platonist texts available: Macrobius's Commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (a work written by a Christian, but moving in the world of ancient Platonism), and the *Timaeus* itself.

Abelard very probably knew Bernard's commentary on the *Timaeus*.<sup>65</sup> But Bernard does not mention the identification of the World Soul with the Holy Spirit. William does. Moreover, William went further in expounding Platonic texts in a way which, despite the fact that their authors were pagans, made them carry, beneath a veil of fiction, truths acceptable to Christians.<sup>66</sup> He usually describes the passages which he believed needed such non-literal interpretation as *integumenta* or *involucra*, a usage he may have inherited from Bernard of Chartres.<sup>67</sup> It is very tempting, therefore, to think that there must have been direct influence, one way or the other, between Abelard's and William's thinking on this area.<sup>68</sup> Investigation into the direction and chronology of the influence uncovers a more complex and, ultimately, very revealing story.

In his earliest commentary on Boethius's *Consolation* (probably c. 1120), William of Conches identifies the World Soul and the Holy

Spirit, and in three subsequent works – the Commentary on Macrobius, the Commentary on the *Timaeus*, and the *Philosophia mundi*, written in this order over the next few years – he mentions the identification, though without endorsing it personally.<sup>69</sup> William's earliest discussion, then, dates from the same time as Abelard first developed his second, favourable view of the World Soul, in the *Theologia* "*summi boni*," or perhaps a little earlier or later. Abelard's earlier hostility in the *Dialectica* very probably dates from well before William started writing. Yet the closest parallel with William is not provided by a text from the *Theologia*, but by Abelard's early, hostile discussion of the World Soul in the *Dialectica*. Abelard here clearly bases his account of the World Soul not on a direct reading of Plato but on Macrobius (1.14.6) and, in rejecting the interpretation of those Christians who "rely too much on allegory," he seems to have had a discussion like that in William's commentary on Macrobius in mind. The point made by William that the World Soul/Holy Spirit has different effects on different people, giving more of its gifts to some than to others, is one of the main ideas taken up by Abelard in his brief discussion.<sup>70</sup> Unless the accepted datings of the *Dialectica* and William's earliest writings are wrong, this parallel suggests that by c. 1115 there was a tradition, probably attached to the reading of Macrobius, according to which the World Soul was identified as the Holy Spirit. Abelard violently rejected this interpretation, whereas William at first accepted it, and then gradually distanced himself from it and finally abandoned it.

There does not seem, either, to have been a *direct* influence of William on Abelard's later, sympathetic discussion of the World Soul, or of that discussion on William. In the *Theologia Christiana* (IV, 140–144; 336:2218–337:2287) and the *Theologia* "*scholarium*" (the identical passage: II, 169–173; 490:2457–492:2519), Abelard returns to the very passage in Macrobius that had been behind his comments on the World Soul in the *Dialectica* and glosses it carefully. Although he and William think that Macrobius is talking about the Trinity, the lack of common ground between these remarks and William's commentary is striking. Even the point about the diversity of gifts of the Holy Spirit is changed and subsumed into a wider, more complex reading.<sup>71</sup>

By examining more carefully the contrast between the two writers, however, one area of influence does emerge. Although one of

William's main methods of interpretation was the uncovering of *integumenta* or *involucra* and, in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, he would explain the discussion of the World Soul as a series of *integumenta*, nowhere does he treat the identification of the World Soul and the Holy Spirit as an *integumentum* or *involucrum*. From William's point of view, it is merely a side issue. Uncovering Plato's *integumentum* is, for William, a matter of finding a scientific account of the making of the world, acceptable to Christians, not of finding Christian doctrine itself hidden in it. By contrast, Abelard talks of an *integumentum* or *involucrum* almost *only* when he is explaining the true meaning of Plato and his followers' remarks on the World Soul as being to do with the Holy Spirit and the Trinity.<sup>72</sup> It seems, then, that Abelard discovered the notion of *integumenta/involucra* – very possibly through the work of Bernard of Chartres or even William himself – but adapted it and used it for a purpose different from William's.

Abelard and William both wished, in some sense, to rationalize Christian belief. But their projects were different. William's lifelong project was to give an account of the creation, nature, and man in terms of natural science, a task to which the doctrine of the Trinity was extremely peripheral. Arguably, he used the idea of *integumentum/involucrum* to further his scientific aims, suggesting that in some cases the belief taught literally to the ordinary faithful was a mere covering, and the true Christian doctrine, hidden except to the learned, fitted a more scientific account of nature.<sup>73</sup> William deeply admired Plato. Yet it was not part of his project – nor had it been part of Bernard of Chartres's – to establish that Plato had shared Christian beliefs. Rather, he wanted to show that Plato was a valuable scientific thinker, whose ideas did not *contradict* Christian teaching.

By contrast, Abelard was uninterested in natural science. His project of reformulating Christian doctrine in a rationally coherent way extended to almost every area, but the teaching on the Trinity was at its center. Seeing the Trinity as a doctrine propounded by the great philosophers of antiquity was an important part of Abelard's attempt to show that it was fully coherent with a rational understanding of what God must be. For this task, the idea of *integumentum/involucrum* was an essential instrument. It is tempting to think that he borrowed this method from William, or at least owed it to the tradition in which William worked.

## NOTES

1. Two short but detailed accounts of Abelard's life are Mews 1995, 9–20 and Marenbon 1997a, 7–35. Both contain full references to primary sources and to modern scholarship. Clanchy 1997 provides a vivid, imaginative, and persuasive account of Abelard's life and background. *HC* is the main source for Abelard's life up to c. 1132, but it must be used with caution: see Marenbon 1997a, 73–74 and chapter 2 below.
2. There has been much debate over whether the Council of Sens took place in June 1141 or June 1140. I am now inclined to follow Mews's arguments for 1141: see Mews 1999, n. 23, 303–304.
3. The fundamental modern work on the chronology and canon of Abelard's works has been done by Constant Mews, especially in the articles reprinted in Mews 2001; cf. also Mews 1995, 20–41. An account of Abelard's writings, making extensive use of Mews's work, is given in Marenbon 1997a, 36–93.
4. *IP Isag.*, *IP De in.*, and *IP De div. IP Cat.* is probably from a little later (c. 1108). Clanchy 1997, 103–104, suggests that these all may be works from the 1130s. He does not take into account that *IP Isag.* and *IP Div.* are striking examples of one approach to exegesis popular at the turn of the twelfth century, but not afterwards (see below, §III.1); *IP Cat.* is very clearly an earlier approach to some of the material which is put forward in the *Dialectica* and *LI Cat.* (I do not myself think that these commentaries should, as the abbreviation used in this volume might suggest, be identified with the *Introductiones parvulorum* mentioned by Abelard.)
5. See Mews 1985; Mews 1995, 28; Marenbon 1997a, 41–43; and Marenbon 1999, 199–215, esp. 200–202.
6. Two texts witness stages of development of Abelard's thought on this area between the commentary of c. 1118–1119 and the *LNPS*: they are the *Positio vocum sententiae* (ed. in Iwakuma 1992b, 66–73), probably reworked by someone other than Abelard; and the *Glossae super Porphyrium secundum vocales* (edited, atrociously, in Ottaviano 1933, 107–207), probably based directly on Abelard's lectures – cf. Mews 1984.
7. Morin 1994.
8. There has been a long dispute over the authenticity of these “personal” letters, but the weight of evidence favors it: see Marenbon 1997a, 82–93; cf. also chapter 2 below. Abelard also wrote a number of letters that are not part of the collection. They are edited by Smits 1983.
9. A disciple of Abelard's preserved a good deal of Abelard's teaching from a later set of lectures (c. 1136–1138) on Romans and the other Pauline epistles: *Comm. cant.*

10. The version probably corrected by Abelard used to be known as the *Sententie Hermanni*. They have been ed. in Buzzetti 1983; a new and better edition by David Luscombe for Corpus Christianorum, *continuatio mediaevalis*, is in press. The other lecture notes are *Sent. Flor.* and *Sent. Par.* On Abelard's authorship of the *Sententie*, see Mews 1986.
11. *Ep.* 8. See below, §II.3.
12. The only published edition remains, so far, that in *Patrologia latina* 178 (the final sections, missing for the *Patrologia* edition, are printed in Buytaert 1968). There is an unpublished critical edition in Romig 1981.
13. It is very probable, though not certain, that these laments were sent to Heloise.
14. See Marenbon 1997a, 332–349.
15. See Marenbon 1997a, 216–331; and chapter 10 below.
16. On the twelfth-century logical curriculum, see Marenbon 2000, 78–79.
17. The *Glosulae* are printed in some of the early printed editions of Priscian: see Rosier-Catach 1993 for the edition of an important section, and Gibson 1979.
18. Irène Rosier-Catach's continuing project of work is illuminating this side of Abelard's writing: see Rosier-Catach 1999; Rosier-Catach forthcoming-b.
19. See *vita prima* in Gibbon 1620, 14–17. There is an excellent discussion of this episode in Clanchy 1997, 91–92.
20. See Bautier 1981, 58–67.
21. A “working catalogue” of the commentaries on the *Isagoge*, *Categories*, and *On Interpretation* is given in Marenbon 2000, 98–122, 130–138.
22. See Marenbon 1997a, 43–44.
23. The commentary (H5) is in Munich, clm 14779, ff. 44r–66r. Although anonymous, its attribution to Abelard is made certain by internal evidence: see the discussion, with quotations, in Iwakuma 1999, 97–98.
24. Cf. Clanchy 1997, 169.
25. The references to the *Pharsalia* in Abelard's and Heloise's work have been sensitively discussed by P. Von Moos: see especially Von Moos 1975 and Von Moos 1976. A different impression of Abelard's range of reading c. 1115, shortly after he met Heloise, emerges if Constant Mews's attribution to him (in Mews 1999) and Heloise of a large collection of love letters copied in a late medieval manuscript is accepted. Powerful arguments against accepting this attribution are put in a review (forthcoming in *Journal of the Classical Tradition*) by Peter Dronke of Wheeler 2000, and I shall give my own reasons for rejecting Mews's arguments in a review of Mews 1999 in the same journal.
26. See Mews 1988.



27. See Marenbon 1997a, 304–310. Cf. also Orlandi and Marenbon 2001, xlii–xliii.
28. See Marenbon 1997a, 315. For Abelard's use of Cicero, see d'Anna 1969.
29. See *HC* 81:654–660; 92:1038–94:1093 (with extensive quotations from Jerome); and 99:1259–1262.
30. For a general discussion, see Miethke 1973 and Luscombe 1975.
31. See Southern 1995, 198–233.
32. Ed. in Minio-Paluello 1956.
33. For commentaries by, or influenced by, Alberic, see Marenbon 1992.
34. Walter seems to have been the advocate of an extreme view about the need for selflessness that influenced Abelard (see Wielockx 1982 and 1988). He is also thought to have been the author of a logical treatise, *Quoniam de generali* (ed. in Hauréau 1892, 298–320).
35. See Mews 1985, 102–104 and Marenbon 1997a, 52–53.
36. See chapter 3 below.
37. The *Isagoge* is best studied in de Libera and Segons 1998 (with Greek text and Boethius's translation, as used in the Middle Ages): see 1 (§2).
38. Iwakuma 1992b, 37–40, lists the occurrences of this label.
39. The fundamental research in this area has been carried out over the last decade or so by Yukio Iwakuma (who has kindly read and commented on the following section) and Constant Mews. See especially Iwakuma 1992b, 1996, 1999; Mews 1992, 1997, and 1998. It was Iwakuma who introduced the word “vocalist” into the modern scholarly discussion, although he prefers to use the word less precisely than I define it. My reconstruction of the pre-history of Abelard's nominalism is rather different from that made by him or by Mews.
40. Edited in Iwakuma 1993a.
41. Iwakuma 1992b uses “vocalist” to describe *in voce* exegetes as well as those with views like, or derived from Abelard's. Not only does this use mask an important distinction, it also does not reflect accurately the contemporary terminology: none of the explicit uses of the terms *vocales* or *sententia vocum* listed by Iwakuma is linked to *in voce* exegesis: they are all linked to vocalists, in my preferred, narrower sense of the term.
42. P4a and 4b, P7, and P30 (ed. in Iwakuma 1992b, 103–111, 74–100, 100–102). The figures (P4a, P30, C5, etc.) here and in the following paragraphs refer to the commentaries catalogued in Marenbon 2000.
43. For the identification of the author and the dating, see Iwakuma 1992b, 47–54. The text is edited in de Rijk 1959.
44. In Herimann, 275: 13–18, a passage referring to the years 1088 to 1092 describes Rainbert as teaching logic *in voce* – a method he describes as a novelty and contrasts with that of Odo of Tournai, who taught it

*in re* "in the manner of Boethius and the learned men of antiquity." The chronicle was written in 1142 or later (cf. p. 267). The passage has been much discussed by modern scholars: see e.g., Iwakuma 1992b, 41; and Mews 1998, 53–54.

45. Porphyry's five predicables are, with regard to language, five different sorts of predicate: genus ("Man is an animal"), species ("Socrates is a man"), *differentia* – the word for the essential characteristic by which members of one species differ from members of another species of the same genus ("Man is rational"), *proprium* – strictly, the word for an accidental characteristic that is possessed by all and only the members of one species ("Man is able to laugh"), and accident – the word for any other non-essential property or relation of something ("Socrates is white"). On some interpretations, the predicables are also the things designated by these words.
46. P4a, ed. in Iwakuma 1992b, 103.
47. Ed. in de Rijk 1959, 10:25–27, 19:9, 33:8.
48. Iwakuma 1992b, 105–106.
49. Jaffé 1869, 187, §98 ("Ad Ruzelinum de vocibus"), ll. 5–8; Iwakuma 1992b, 41; Mews 1998, 52. These scholars also cite a passage from the *Historia francica* (in Bouquet 1781, vol. XII, 36C) where Roscelin is said to have been a follower, along with Robert of Paris and Arnulf of Laon, of a certain John, who is said to have held that dialectic is "vocal." John need not, however, on this account be considered an *in voce* exegete, let alone a vocalist: he might merely have followed the type of verbal approach exemplified in William of Champeaux's *Introductiones*.
50. Paris BN lat. 13368, f. 178ra, quoted (and emended) in Iwakuma 1992b, 60.
51. Schmitt 1946, vol. I, 285.
52. See Jolivet 1992, 116–118. Here Jolivet develops an interesting account of Roscelin's views, emphasizing his semantics.
53. Yukio Iwakuma has recently brought to light a *Categories* commentary (C27) which is described in its title as being by Master "Ros" – the abbreviation used by, for instance, Abelard, for Roscelin. He has very kindly supplied me with the transcription of about half of the text that he has so far made. The commentary does not, I believe, support the positions which the other evidence suggests were characteristic of Roscelin c. 1100. On universals, its position is that genera and species are *sermones* – that is to say (T4), Abelard's position from the 1120s onwards, although *sermo* is a term used frequently by Boethius himself in his *Categories* commentary. The methodology of exegesis, too, is like the mature Abelard's, as is its author's tendency to bring theological questions into the discussion. If C27 is really by Roscelin, then my very

- tentative view is that it dates from c. 1120 and belongs to the world of discussion of Abelard's *Logica* and *LNPS*.
54. Yukio Iwakuma has established this point (in Iwakuma 1996), although I do not interpret his findings in the same way as he does.
  55. Cf. Abelard's description of material essence realism in the *LI Isag.* 10:17–25. I am grateful to Christopher Martin for helping me to understand MER in this way.
  56. Oxford Laud. lat. 67, f. 10ra, quoted in Iwakuma 1996, 121.
  57. Oxford Laud. lat. 67, f. 10ra. I am very grateful to Professor Iwakuma for sending me his complete, unpublished edition of this commentary.
  58. Iwakuma prints the relevant passage from the later version in Iwakuma 1992b, 44. Iwakuma used to date this version of P3 to 1060–1070, but now he believes it was written just before 1100. Iwakuma does not consider that the material essence theory is proposed in this commentary, but was devised by William in haste, on the basis of Anselm's theology, only once Abelard had challenged him: see Iwakuma 1999, 118–119.
  59. Iwakuma has shown how this theory is adopted in P14, also probably by William: see Iwakuma 1999, 119.
  60. See Marenbon 1997a, 111–115.
  61. See Marenbon 1992, 53.
  62. Whether the Nominales were so called because they considered universals to be *nomina*, and whether they were the followers of Abelard, has been disputed – but the most probable answer is “Yes”: see the papers from a conference on twelfth-century nominalism arranged by William Courtenay printed in *Vivarium* 30 (1992), especially those by Normore (1992), Iwakuma (1992a), and myself (1992).
  63. See Marenbon 1997a, 42–43 and Marenbon 1997b, 110–118.
  64. The text is published, and its attribution to Bernard supported with powerful arguments, in Dutton 1991.
  65. See Marenbon 1997b, 123–127.
  66. See especially Jeauneau 1973, 127–192; and Dronke 1974, 13–55.
  67. Bernard uses the terms quite frequently in his Commentary on the *Timaeus* (cf. Dutton 1991, *index verborum*). The terms begin to have a metaphorical use in classical Latin, and Augustine's use of them is close to that found in the twelfth century: see Dronke 1974, 56, n. 2 for a detailed discussion.
  68. Various scholars have wished to make a connection: see Jeauneau 1973, 290; Mews 1985, 100–102; and Dronke 1974, 57–60.
  69. Nauta 1999, 169:525–170:531; see the references given by Jeauneau in the place cited in the next note for references to the other works.
  70. Compare *Dial.* 558.30–35: “Qui quidem Spiritus, cum totus ubique diffusus omnia contineat, quorundam tamen fidelium cordibus per

inhabitantem gratiam sua largitur charismata, quae vivificare dicitur suscitando in eas virtutes; in quibusdam vero dona ipsius vacare videntur, quae sua digna habitatione non invenit, cum tamen et [in] ipsis praesentia eius non desit, sed virtutum exercitium” and William of Conches, Commentary on Macrobius I.14.6 (Vatican Urbin. lat. 1140, f.80v): “Non enim omnibus idem confert. Septem (MS viii) enim confert haec dona: alii aliud, uni plus, alii minus.” (Jeauneau prints this passage in his edition of William’s *Glosae super Platonem* [Jeauneau 1965, 145, n. (c)].) I am grateful to Edouard Jeauneau for lending me his photographs of the whole manuscript.

71. The relevant part of William’s commentary is on ff. 79v–80v of Vatican Urbin. lat. 1140. In *TC* and *TSch*, one of Abelard’s main points is that Macrobius is talking about the Holy Spirit only in its function as a soul. It is in this sense that it “degenerates,” because it has its effects in time, not eternity. Abelard then brings in the multiplicity of the Holy Spirit’s gifts as a comparison: Macrobius refers to the Holy Spirit in a temporal way, although it is eternal, just as people refer to the Spirit as sevenfold although it is entirely simple. Jeauneau also draws a parallel between Abelard’s and William’s attempts to explain away Macrobius’s employment of the word “create” in connection with *Nous* (the Son) and the Soul (the Holy Spirit). But Abelard’s explanation – that by “is created” Macrobius meant simply “comes from something else” – is not found in William.
72. Abelard does not use either of the words “*integumentum*” or “*involucrum*” outside the *Theologia*. The only instance where one of them is used except in discussing the World Soul and the Holy Spirit/Trinity is at *TC* 2.126; 191:1922 (referring to the *mystica involucra* in the Bible).
73. See Dronke 1974, 50–53.

## 2 Literary works

Though the main concern of this volume is Abelard's work in philosophy and theology, he made important and original contributions in a number of fields. His substantial essays in apologetic and biblical exegesis are discussed in other chapters.<sup>1</sup> Studies still in progress are revealing his extensive and wide-ranging activity as a liturgist, and seeking to recover concrete evidence of his work as a composer of music. But his most remarkable non-philosophical role is as a literary artist, a master of narrative and lyric form who produced art of a high order out of his own complex and tormented life.

Any account of Abelard the artist must begin with the *Historia calamitatum*, the narrative of his struggles as man, philosopher, and monk over thirty years. Ostensibly written to console an unnamed friend by inviting him to contrast his own misfortunes with the far greater sufferings of Abelard, the *Historia* seems clearly to have been designed to engage a wider audience. Whether viewed as an authentic *apologia pro vita sua* or as an astute exercise in historical romance, this unique document and the story it tells have inevitably defined our sense of the character and personality of Abelard. So compelling is the *Historia* indeed, so evocative of romance and hagiography in its framing of the crucial events of Abelard's life, and so eloquent in the lessons it draws from these events, that it is hard to resist the suspicion that it is essentially a work of imaginative fiction. But it is unique too in that its historicity has been tested perhaps as rigorously as that of any comparable work. Its status as a work of Abelard, and as initiating the series of "personal" letters by Abelard and Heloise that accompany it in virtually all manuscripts, now seems to have been decisively established, while the exhaustive readings to which it has been subjected have greatly enhanced our ability to appreciate it as

a literary text. Moreover, as I will try to show, it also provides an invaluable framework for considering Abelard the poet. The love-lyrics which we can tentatively ascribe to him, the *planctus* or laments on Old Testament themes, and even the later hymns and sequences assume a richer significance when read in relation to the version of his life recounted in the *Historia*.

Since it has generated something of a renaissance in the study of Abelard the writer, the history of the authorship controversy is worth reviewing briefly. The question of authorship had been raised from time to time by earlier scholars, but assumed a new seriousness when, in 1972, the late Professor John Benton questioned the authenticity of the personal letters on the grounds of what seemed to be their basic inaccuracies and unaccountable omissions in regard to what is known about the lives of the protagonists from other sources. In addition Benton noted that the monastic Rule that Abelard offers to Heloise and her abbey of the Paraclete in the last of the letters does not accord with what we know of the practice of the Paraclete in Heloise's day. Benton suggested that this letter was a thirteenth-century forgery, compiled, with the aid of authentic writings of Abelard, to promote certain changes in the Rule of the abbey, most notable among them the introduction of male authority. He further suggested that the *Historia* and the other letters were also forgeries, produced to reinforce the authenticity of the forged Rule, and were probably based on a twelfth-century work of fiction which in turn was based broadly on Abelard's life.<sup>2</sup>

Benton was a gifted scholar and a specialist in medieval autobiography, and his developed argument is a good deal more substantial than it may sound in bald summary. But opponents pointed out serious methodological weaknesses in his analyses of the language of the letters and in his interpretation of crucial passages.<sup>3</sup> Benton himself came eventually to the view that the personal letters must have been produced in the early twelfth century, and that attribution to Abelard was quite plausible.<sup>4</sup> He continued, however, to argue on the basis of statistical analyses of the language of the letters that a single author had produced both sides of the correspondence, and so kept alive his earlier theory that the collection as a whole was an elaborate fiction.<sup>5</sup>

More recently the case for authenticity has been strengthened. A remarkable study by David Luscombe accounts for many of the

seeming inconsistencies in the collection, shows that puzzling details in the *Historia* can be illumined by what is known of Abelard's familial and political affinities, and demonstrates important connections between the personal letters and other, unquestionably authentic exchanges between Abelard and Heloise over the affairs of the Paraclete.<sup>6</sup> Peter Dronke, analyzing the distribution of different patterns of prose rhythm in the personal letters, has made a persuasive case for seeing them as the work of two authors.<sup>7</sup> Finally a recently discovered collection of excerpts from Latin love-letters exchanged by a man and a woman have been attributed on similar grounds, stylistic and circumstantial, to Heloise and Abelard.<sup>8</sup>

In the discussion of the *Historia calamitatum* which follows I assume that it is the authentic work of Abelard. It does not follow, of course, that it presents a factual and objective account of his experience or his relations with Heloise, and indeed, as I will show, there are good reasons to distrust it. But at a time when letter-writing was coming into its own as an art, and its possibilities as a vehicle for self-representation were beginning to be recognized,<sup>9</sup> the *Historia* is a truly pioneering work. Its very distortions and contradictions can be seen as manifestations of the complexities of individual character. The radical shifts of tone and emphasis which make it difficult to read express the several, at times conflicting purposes of a work that incorporates the perspectives of consolation, romance, confession, and religious instruction, and in which much is left unresolved.

## I. THE *HISTORIA CALAMITATUM*

### I.1 *Romance and confession*

The main episodes of the story are well known: Abelard's early success as a student and teacher, leading to a prominent position in Paris; his affair with Heloise and its discovery; her pregnancy, their marriage, Abelard's castration by her vengeful kinsmen, and their taking of religious vows; his troubles as a monk and the condemnation of his treatise on the Trinity (*TSB*); the renewal of his teaching career at the Paraclete; his unsuccessful attempt to govern the monastery of St. Gildas; the establishment of Heloise and her nuns at the Paraclete. The purpose of the *Historia*, as stated in the opening

lines and recalled in the final paragraphs, is consolatory: having read it, the anonymous friend to whom it is addressed will appreciate the enormity of Abelard's sufferings and be better able to bear his own. But the sequence of events is disjointed, and the tone and governing conventions of the narrative change markedly from one section of the story to another.

The narrative proper begins on a note of self-advertisement. Abelard was the eldest son of a knight, and though he renounced his patrimony to study philosophy, his description of his restless, intensely competitive nature, and his travels from school to school in quest of *conflictus disputationum*, consciously evokes the way of life expected of young men who aspired to knighthood.<sup>10</sup> The opening chapters describe a series of quasi-military victories over other philosophers, culminating in the successful besieging of Paris itself.

Abelard's acknowledged brilliance and his disdain for envy and intrigue suggest the Arthurian heroes of Geoffrey of Monmouth and emergent chivalric romance, whose prowess coexists with sophistication and versatility. His victories are those of *ingenium* ("genius," "talent"), *gratia*, and bold originality over authority and traditional practice. And they are emphatically *victories*. William of Champeaux is to Abelard as Hector laid low by Ajax; Anselm of Laon is a faltering Pompey to his brilliantly ascendant Caesar (*HC* 66–67; Radice 1974, 62). The dialectician-as-warrior is something of a *topos* in this period,<sup>11</sup> but Abelard was its embodiment *par excellence*, and in his sixties the younger Bernard of Clairvaux could still compare him to Goliath.<sup>12</sup>

What is absent in these chapters is any hint of an informing ideal in Abelard's intellectual development. Virtuoso argumentation and the humiliation of rivals, including former teachers, are evidently ends in themselves. In the face of the malice and envy of his opponents, Abelard's only apparent failing is an ambitious pride, pardonable in view of his success. All of this changes abruptly when, finally established in Paris as by his own estimate "the only philosopher in the world" (*HC* 70; Radice 1974, 65), he allows his self-discipline to lapse. Just as abruptly, a narrative which had begun as a scholarly *roman d'aventure*, having attained the point at which the proven warrior turns to thoughts of love, is transformed into a confessional narrative in the tradition of Augustine:



But now the further I advanced in philosophy and theology, the further I fell behind the philosophers and holy fathers in the impurity of my life . . . Since therefore I was wholly enslaved to pride and lechery, God's grace provided a remedy for both these evils, though not of my own choosing: first for my lechery by depriving me of those organs with which I practised it, and then for the pride which had grown in me through my learning – for in the words of the Apostle, “Knowledge breeds conceit” – when I was humiliated by the burning of the book of which I was so proud. (*HC* 70–71; Radice 1974, 65)

This schematic balancing of sin and judgement is complemented by Abelard's coldly analytical account of his conquest of Heloise, which he presents as a wholly self-interested exploitation of the pedagogical authority over the much younger woman that her unworldly uncle had granted him. His account of their eager love-making is clinical in its emphasis on the physical:

To avert suspicion I sometimes struck her, but these blows were prompted by love and tender feeling rather than anger and irritation, and were sweeter than any balm could be. In short, our desires left no stage of love-making untried, and if love could devise something new, we welcomed it. We entered on each joy the more eagerly for our previous inexperience, and were the less easily sated. (*HC* 73; Radice 1974, 67–68)

Exhausted by “nightly vigils,” Abelard neglects his teaching, and like Anselm of Laon as caustically described in an earlier chapter (*HC* 21–22; Radice 1974, 62), is compelled to abandon *ingenium* in favor of *usus* (“rote,” “standard fare”). From beginning to end of his account of the secret affair the prevailing tone is dispassionate and self-condemning.

But after the discovery of the affair by Heloise's uncle there occurs another, more complicated shift of perspective:

Imagine the lovers' grief at being separated! How I blushed with shame and contrition for the girl's plight, and what sorrow she suffered at the thought of my disgrace! All our laments were for one another's troubles, and our distress was for each other, not for ourselves. Separation drew our hearts still closer while frustration inflamed our passion even more; then we became more abandoned as we lost all sense of shame and, indeed, shame diminished as we found more opportunities for love-making. (*HC* 74; Radice 1974, 68–69)

The conduct of the lovers is still programed by physical desire, but with this emphasis there now coexists a suggestion of mutuality

that again recalls the world of courtly romance. Their concern with one another's suffering and the intensification of their love through separation call to mind the story of Tristan and Isolde. We hear love affirmed for its own sake when Heloise, pregnant and in danger, climaxes the discourse in which she seeks to dissuade Abelard from marrying her by insisting that she would rather be lover than wife, and that "only love freely given should keep me for her, not the constriction of a marriage tie." And it is in the spirit of the dark later stages of the Tristan story that she concludes her long *dissuasio* with a fatalistic prophecy: "We shall both be destroyed; all that is left us is suffering as great as our love has been" (*HC* 79; Radice 1974, 74).

This remarkable sentence is in fact the *Historia's* final word on the love of Heloise and Abelard as such, and it has the effect of enshrining this aspect of their life as a thing apart, an experience profoundly meaningful yet with a meaning accessible only to themselves. It is an experience, moreover, which allows us to contrast the lovers, even as it illustrates their solidarity. For all his concern for the sufferings of Heloise, Abelard exhibits a wholly selfish anxiety for his reputation (*HC* 75; Radice 1974, 70), while Heloise, in her unfaltering devotion, assumes a virtually heroic stature. Even the most mundane of her arguments on the unsuitability of marriage for the philosopher, "the constant degrading defilement of infants" (*inhonestas illas parvulorum sordes assiduas*), has a certain grandeur (*assiduas* is especially fine), and she is consistent in utterly devaluing her own claim on Abelard in comparison with the value of his "shining light" to the world at large.

Our final glimpse of Heloise, after she has been ordered by Abelard to take the veil, is perhaps her finest moment. On the point of renouncing the world and disappearing from the narrative, her last words echo the speech in which Lucan's Cornelia, wife of Pompey the Great, seeks to take on herself the blame for his defeat at Pharsalia (*HC* 81; Radice 1974, 76). This brief scene is both a splendid tribute to the heroically self-sacrificing Heloise, and a devastating comment on Abelard's own situation. For it was to Lucan's Pompey, "the mere shadow of a great name," that he had compared Anselm of Laon (*HC* 68; Radice 1974, 62), and now compares himself. The haplessness of Pompey, whose very "greatness" now seems a curse, and the emptiness of the heroic posture he adopts in attempting to console his wife, have their counterpart in Abelard's sense of himself at this

moment, still overcome by the shock of his castration by the kinsmen of Heloise.<sup>13</sup> More painful than the injury itself are the blow to his renown and the retribution that his earlier scorn for rivals will now bring upon him. Though his ability to interpret difficult biblical texts had seemed a divine gift (*HC* 82; Radice 1974, 78), he now finds himself utterly confounded by “the cruel letter of the Law,” which declares that no eunuch shall come before the Lord (*HC* 80; Radice 1974, 76).

### 1.2 *Monastic life and spiritual commitment*

Aside from the admission that the decision was motivated by shame rather than devotion, Abelard’s entry into the abbey of St. Denis is barely noted. But he emphasizes his concern to live up to the obligations of monastic life, and in fact the *Historia* henceforth is almost entirely the story of his attempts to realize religious goals in a hostile and conniving world. The next major episode, his trial at Soissons and the burning of his treatise on the Trinity (*TSB*), is carefully prepared. Having resumed teaching at the request of his followers, repudiated the lax monastic life of St. Denis, and established a successful school at a lesser, unnamed monastery, Abelard composed this treatise, as he explains, in response to his students’ demand that he bring “analogies from human reason” (*humane rationis similitudinibus*) to the support of the truths of faith:

They said that nothing could be believed unless it was first understood, and that it was absurd for anyone to preach to others what neither he nor those he taught could grasp with the understanding: the Lord himself criticized such “blind guides of blind men”. (*HC* 83; Radice 1974, 78)

The final phrase, echoing Christ’s dismissive characterization of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:14), is the first of a series of allusions which in the next few pages will define the blind intolerance of Abelard’s detractors and set off the pure and enlightened motives of Abelard himself in terms of the persecution of Christ. At Soissons, while his detractors ransack his treatise in a futile search for heresy, Abelard gives public lectures to show the orthodoxy of his writings. He suggests the view of most of those present concerning his alleged heresy by citing John 7:26: “Here he is, speaking openly, and no one utters a word against him,” though he stops short of the explicit

reference to Christ with which that verse concludes (*HC* 84; Radice 1974, 79). Later Geoffrey, Bishop of Chartres, pleading for a fair trial, is made to ask, with Nicodemus, "Does our law judge a man unless it first give him a hearing and know what he does?" (John 7:51; *HC* 86; Radice 1974, 81). Finally, after Abelard has been forced to burn his book, Thierry of Chartres, resisting his bishop's attempt to silence him, rebukes the judges by quoting at length Daniel's censure of the elders who had falsely accused Susanna (Daniel 12:48–49; *HC* 83; Radice 1974, 83). The effect of these allusions is to confer on Abelard's condemnation the glory of an intellectual martyrdom.

But it is important to remember that this almost bizarre emphasis on the injustice of the condemnation coexists in Abelard's mind with a clear recognition of his guilt in the sight of God. The intellectual and the erotic aspects of his early career are closely related, themes of the same "romance," expressions of the same desire for control and recognition on his own terms, and they lead to closely related sins of pride and lust for which, as he admits, God has justly punished him (*HC* 70–71; Radice 1974, 65). The connection is pointed up by clear parallels in Abelard's narration, first of the seduction of Heloise, then of the composition of his treatise. The seduction is carefully framed in pedagogical terms, as a gradual displacement of linguistic by physical communication:

With our books open before us, more words of love than of our reading passed between us, and more kissing than teaching. My hands strayed oftener to her bosom than to the pages; love drew our eyes to look on each other more than reading kept them on our texts. (*HC* 72–73; Radice 1974, 67)

Heloise will later recall vividly the charm of Abelard's love-poems (*Ep.* 1, 71–72; Radice 1974, 115). What this passage describes is in effect the consummation of the appeal of love-poetry, the realization in concrete terms of the precepts of the Ovidian *magister amoris*. And when Abelard later describes the circumstances that led him to compose his treatise on the Trinity, he does so in broadly similar terms. Here again the secular arts function as a "baited hook" to draw his adoring students toward "the true philosophy" (*HC* 82; Radice 1974, 77). The treatise he produces in response to their demands can again be seen as displacing traditional authority by the force of personal *ingenium*, a self-assertion all the more striking in that what Abelard claims to have achieved, "matching the importance of the

problem by the subtlety of his solution" (*HC* 83; Radice 1974, 78), is a rational demonstration of the relationship of the Persons of the Trinity. The parallel between the two acts of pedagogical presumption is surely intentional. Abelard will later acknowledge that the desire for wealth and fame had motivated his teaching in Paris (*HC* 82; Radice 1974, 77); here he seems to tacitly acknowledge the possibility that his indulgence in the innovative theological reasoning which made him famous had been itself a selfish exploitation of the authority of his office, a violation of trust comparable to his earlier exploitation of his tutorial relationship with Heloise.

It would perhaps have been appropriate to the confessional tone of this portion of the *Historia* for Abelard to have completed the comparison by dwelling on the ways in which the burning of his treatise might be viewed as a counterpart to his castration, a judgment on his having presumed to generate doctrine by an illicit appropriation of the arts of language.<sup>14</sup> But while he continues to see a connection between the two afflictions, it is noteworthy that he views them henceforth in wholly providential terms. This new perspective is first revealed obliquely, in the context of his students' attempt to persuade him to resume teaching, which recall the earlier exhortations of Heloise:

They urged me to consider that the talent entrusted to me by God would be required of me with interest; that instead of addressing myself to the rich as before I should devote myself to educating the poor, and recognize that the hand of the Lord had touched me for the express purpose of freeing me from the temptations of the flesh and the distractions of the world so that I could devote myself to learning, and prove myself a true philosopher not of the world but of God. (*HC* 81; Radice 1974, 77)

Henceforth Abelard will never depart from this redemptive view of his two misfortunes, and indeed one of the most striking features of the later portions of the *Historia* is the absence of any acknowledgment of guilt on his part. It is easy enough to imagine personal motives, conscious or unconscious, for this evident suppression; here as throughout the *Historia* Abelard the autobiographer is a temptation for the psychoanalyst. As a victim of castration he is at the mercy of other people's willingness to discover the traces, symbolic and emotional, which so traumatic an event must have left in his writings, and it is easy to hear paranoia in the constant fear that dominates

the final episodes, and leads him to suppose that any assembly of Church officials must have been convened for the purpose of condemning his writings (*HC* 97; Radice 1974, 93). His attitude toward the writings themselves, moreover, is contradictory: the condemnation at Soissons, which seems at one moment a just punishment for ambition and intellectual pride, is elsewhere bemoaned as an abuse of his “pure intentions and love of our faith” (*HC* 89; Radice 1974, 85).

But with due regard for the conflicted preoccupation with self that seems to have been a basic element in Abelard’s personality, we should also make full allowance for the fact that he had come to see himself as genuinely embarked on a new life, in which intellectual labor and the renown to which it might lead were wholly at the service of the religious institutions with which he had now identified himself. There is a new emphasis in his account of how, having been driven by abuse to leave St. Denis for a second time, he was released from his obligation to the abbey and allowed to build himself a rough oratory in the countryside near Troyes. Though he describes at length the intellectual and spiritual community that his disciples create around him, there is nothing self-aggrandizing in his account of it. What he stresses is the zeal of the students themselves, which combines the austerity and dedication of the ancient philosophers as described by Jerome with that of the followers of Elisha (2 Kings 6:1–4). His enemies are forced to acknowledge that “the whole world follows after him” (John 12:19), that their persecution of him has defeated its own purpose, but his own attitude remains one of simple gratitude for relief from poverty and despair. This portion of the *Historia* is crowned by his naming his oratory for the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit as comforter, thereby affirming that his commitment to the religious life has been vindicated, and that a special providence has preserved him in his suffering (*HC* 94–95; Radice 1974, 90–91).

### 1.3 *Calumny and tribulation*

After this episode, the spiritual center of the *Historia*, a final abrupt change occurs. Despite his withdrawal, the hostility incurred by Abelard in his early days continues to pursue him, and he retreats again to the protection of the cloister. The final portions of the

*Historia* deal with his disastrous attempt as abbot to reform the Breton monastery of St. Gildas, and his role in establishing and maintaining Heloise and the nuns in her charge at the Paraclete after their expulsion from Argenteuil. This last episode is dealt with very briefly, perhaps because Abelard was only occasionally present during the community's early days, but he makes it the occasion for an elaborate justification of his involvement with the sisterhood. Having defended himself against the charge of lewd motives, he goes on to cite patristic testimony on the positive role played by women in the early Church, and the many fathers who involved themselves with communities of women. This topic leads him to enunciate the principle that the weaker sex must be led by the stronger, and to reflections on the impropriety and even danger involved in letting male clergy be subject to the authority of abbesses, capped rather oddly by Juvenal's dictum that nothing is more intolerable than a rich woman (*HC* 105; Radice 1974, 102). Abelard does not develop the misogynist implications of this line of argument, but the authoritarian note struck here will recur in his letters to Heloise.

The circumstances described in these chapters are too concrete and too fresh in memory to lend themselves to hagiographic stylization, but they provide their own distinctive perspective on Abelard at this stage of his career, mainly through extended citation of Paul and the Greek and Latin Fathers, and comparisons between Abelard's situation and theirs. The lives of Athanasius, Origen, Benedict, and above all Jerome are recalled in attestation of the hardship and calumny Abelard is forced to endure, confirming him as a member of God's body, the true Church, one of those who suffer persecution for seeking "to live a godly life as Christians" (2 Timothy 3:12; *HC* 107–108; Radice 1974, 105).

Jerome is an important presence in these last chapters. Like Abelard, he had sought to combine in his own life the austerity of the true philosopher and the regular discipline of the monk. Both men were strong-willed and combative in asserting their religious views, and both were dogged by constant controversy and hostility. Both took a strongly authoritarian position as spiritual advisors to female religious communities, and both were vilified for the alleged impurity of their relations with religious women. Abelard clearly recognized their affinity. His final reference to himself in the *Historia* takes the form of a comparison of his situation with that of Jerome,

“whose heir in calumny and tribulation I am,” glossed by Jerome’s assertion that there is no time when the true Christian does not suffer persecution (*HC* 108; Radice 1974, 105).

The *Historia*, as I have said, brings together several literary modes, and it would probably be impossible to discover a fully harmonious design in its deployment of the conventions of *apologia* and *confessio*, its balancing of courtly idealism and Ovidian cynicism in its treatment of love, the juxtaposition of confessions of failure and abject self-pity with assertions of authority and near-sainthood. If a single thread holds its diverse elements together, it is probably Abelard’s consistency in frankly acknowledging his sins in the sight of God, and his failure to live up to the standard of fidelity and humility set by Heloise, while at the same time refusing to accept the judgment of any human authority on his life and work. Ignorant malice and envy of his superior intellect are the only motives he will allow his antagonists in the schools and at Soissons. The monks of St. Denis and later St. Gildas repudiate him because his austere rectitude is in such vivid contrast to their own corruption.

As the story goes forward, however, even self-analysis is abandoned, and Abelard’s spiritual state is presented as constant and beyond question. The betrayal of trust involved in his seduction of Heloise, and even the sins of lust and pride with which he taxes himself are forgotten. After the lovers’ separation the focus of the story narrows still further, to the point at which Heloise herself becomes merely incidental, hardly more important than the anonymous “friend” to whom the *Historia* is ostensibly directed. All that matters is Abelard’s endurance of suffering; we accept the strength of his commitment, but we must accept as well that everything else has ceased to matter.

#### 1.4 *The response of Heloise*

Perhaps the most astute comment on this special difficulty of the *Historia* is offered by Heloise, candidly and perhaps with a certain irony, in the letter which conveys her response to Abelard’s narrative. After noting pointedly that she had seen the letter only by chance, and briefly reviewing the events of the story, she observes that while it declares itself a letter of consolation, and so is presumably intended to comfort the anonymous friend in his misfortune, it is really about Abelard himself, whose “incessant, intolerable persecutions” must



drive any true friend of his to despair (*Ep.* 1, 68–69; Radice 1974, 109–111). There is perhaps a veiled accusation of selfishness here, and as the letter proceeds, the suggestion grows stronger. Heloise expresses gratitude for the gift of the Paraclete and assures Abelard of her enduring love for him, but then asks why, knowing her absolute loyalty and all that she has done at his bidding, he has never directed a word of comfort to her:

I have finally denied myself every pleasure in obedience to your will, kept nothing for myself except to prove that now, even more, I am yours. Consider then your injustice, if when I deserve more you give me less, or rather, nothing at all, especially when it is a small thing I ask of you and one you could so easily grant. (*Ep.* 1, 73; Radice 1974, 117)

The problem Heloise addresses in this letter is the fundamental problem posed by the *Historia*. What is its purpose? Whom could it possibly console save Abelard himself? What, then, does it reveal about Abelard's ability to share the sufferings of others? It is as if with her seemingly gratuitous summary of the narrative Heloise had deliberately conjured up the spirit of the *Historia* in order to pit her intense humanity against the utter self-absorption of its author. Abelard had isolated himself within the epistolary conventions of *consolatio* and *apologia*. Heloise, by radically personalizing and eroticizing the *epistola ad amicum*, will challenge him to engage in a genuine dialogue.<sup>15</sup>

In the letters which follow, however, Abelard withdraws still further, persisting in his preoccupation with himself and addressing Heloise in the broadly homiletic manner of a spiritual advisor. He acknowledges the personal bond between them only as a special inducement to Heloise to offer prayers on his behalf, and as an occasion for recalling to her mind the efficacious prayers of biblical wives and mothers (*Ep.* 2, 74–77; Radice 1974, 121–125). In response to Heloise's vivid evocations of their former passion, he expresses only relief that castration has now released him from "the heavy yoke of carnal desire" (*Ep.* 4, 89; Radice 1974, 148). Later, as if deliberately repudiating his own earlier tribute to Heloise's loyalty, he cites the speech in which Lucan's Pompey rebukes Cornelia for clinging to the memory of his former greatness (*Ep.* 4, 92; Radice 1974, 153; cf. also *HC* 81; Radice 1974, 76). While claiming to be the servant of Heloise (*me habes servum quem olim agnoscebas dominum*), he never abandons this authoritarian tone, and the only possibility of

communion he will acknowledge is their common participation in the grace obtained by her prayers on his behalf (*Ep.* 4, 93; Radice 1974, 154).

## II. ABELARD THE POET

### II.1 *The Paraclete Hymnary*

It remains clear that Heloise and her sisterhood were a central concern of the last decade of Abelard's life. Perhaps the best evidence is the sheer quantity of his varied contributions to the devotional activity of the Paraclete. Many of these have only recently come to light, and it would exceed the scope of this chapter to attempt an adequate assessment of material whose authorship and significance are still very much *sub iudice*. Suffice it to say that Abelard's contributions seem to have included a virtually complete repertory of liturgical materials, and that he was certainly a significant innovator in liturgical poetry. His importance as a composer of music is much harder to determine, but it is clear that musical and perhaps dramatic performance were important considerations in all of his poetry, and that the music employed must in some cases have been his own.<sup>16</sup>

The most remarkable result of his labors is an extensive collection of hymns which, while they did not finally displace the older Cistercian and Gallican material in the Paraclete Office, were clearly intended as a complete hymn-cycle for the liturgical year.<sup>17</sup> The scope of the project and its importance to Abelard are made plain in the preface to the first of the three books in which he presented the main body of his hymns to Heloise and her sisters. This takes the form of a justification of his undertaking by way of a critique of the state of traditional hymnody which he puts into the mouth of Heloise. She is made to complain that custom alone, rather than any coherent principle, determines the traditional repertory; that many texts are truncated or otherwise corrupt; that the hymns to the saints are tainted by fictional or apocryphal material; and that hymns are often lacking for specific festivals. In effect she is asking for a total reform of the monastic hymnary, and thus allowing Abelard to present his ambitious undertaking as the necessary labor of a spiritual mentor. But the ambition is hard to conceal. Though nearly all of the preface

purports to be the words of Heloise, it is a wholly Abelardian manifesto, as carefully and confidently argued as the preface to the *Sic et non*.

The hymnary is the work of a remarkable poet, unique among twelfth-century religious poets in the variety and intricacy of his stanzaic forms and patterns of rhyme, but it is remarkable also for the tact and control with which Abelard adapts his prodigious lyric talent to his devotional purpose. The collection is informed by a thorough and deeply appreciative knowledge of the themes, diction, and rhythms of patristic hymnody.<sup>18</sup> The finest hymns have the compactness and lucidity of Ambrose, and their straightforward deployment of the conventions of biblical typology is in striking contrast to the virtually free-associative rumination that at times obscures meaning in the sequences of earlier medieval liturgical poets like Notker or Gottschalk. The frequent reflections on the multiple meanings of scripture aim at effective pedagogy,<sup>19</sup> and there is little of the flamboyant metaphysical word-play that marks the work of Abelard's great contemporary Adam of St. Victor.

Despite what Waddell rightly calls the "exuberant efflorescence" of Abelard's strophic forms, they are aptly and systematically deployed. Thus a cluster of Epiphany hymns report the events of Christ's earthly career in an energetic meter that evokes the narrative hymns of Hilary and Fortunatus. These are followed by a group which reflect on the Purification of the Virgin in the stately rhythms of Ambrose, and these in turn by four which celebrate the Resurrection in a six-line stanza with free-standing internal refrain that anticipates the vernacular rondeau:

Golias prostratus est,	Dicant Sion filie
<i>Resurrexit Dominus!</i>	<i>Resurrexit Dominus!</i>
ense iugulatus est	Vero Daui obuie
hostis proprio.	choros proferant,
Cum suis submersus est	uictori uictorie
ille Pharao.	laudes concinant.

Goliath lies prostrate, *The Lord has Risen!*,  
 the enemy's throat has been cut by his own sword.  
 Pharaoh and his people have been drowned.

Let the daughters of Sion say it: *The Lord has Risen!*,  
 Let them perform their dances before the true David,  
 Let them sing for the victor the praises of his victory.<sup>20</sup>

In a hymn on the Apostles, the language of learning serves, as in the sermons of Augustine, to set off the humility of truth:<sup>21</sup>

Nil urbanitas hic rethorice, Eloquentia cessit Tullii;  
 nil uerbositas agit logice, tace, dictum est Aristoteli;  
 sed simplicitas fidei sacre leges proferunt mundo rustici.

Here no rhetorical sophistication or logical word-play is at work, but rather the simplicity of holy faith.

The eloquence of Cicero is stilled, and Aristotle is bidden to fall silent, while simple men teach the world their rules.

## II.2 *The Planctus*

Both Abelard and Heloise identify Abelard as a love-poet (*HC* 355; *Ep.* 1, 71–72; Radice 1974, 68, 115), but no love-lyrics survive that can be identified as his. What we do have, in addition to the hymns, is a group of six lyrics, so original in conception as to constitute a genre in themselves, *planctus* or laments in which figures from the Old Testament protest the circumstances and injustice of their impending deaths or the deaths of those they love.

We can only guess at Abelard's purpose in composing the *Planctus*, which Peter Dronke compares to the vocal works of Monteverdi.<sup>22</sup> They are his most elaborate artistic productions, so intricate metrically as to invite comparison with the *cansos* of the Troubadours, and accompanied in the manuscripts by musical notation, some of which may be referable to Abelard himself.<sup>23</sup> And they are equally remarkable thematically, in their consistent focus on the purely human nature of the emotion they dramatize. In some this involves expanding on biblical episodes, as in the two laments, for Abner and for Saul and Jonathan,<sup>24</sup> which Abelard puts into the mouth of David. In others the grief expressed is wholly non-canonical. The Bible does not report the response of Jacob's daughter Dinah to her brothers' murder of her Philistine rapist-turned husband Shechem (Genesis 34), or the lamentation of the Israelites for Samson. Nor does Abelard provide the sort of conventional typology that would link these figures prophetically to New Testament counterparts. The common element in these two poems is their responsiveness to the cruelty of victimization and loss. Thus in the first, Abelard's Dinah

condones her rape: Shechem had himself been ravished by her beauty, and atoned for his violent act by marrying her:

Amoris impulsio, culpe satisfactio,  
quovis sunt iudicio culpe diminutio!

The driving force was love; satisfaction was given for the wrong. Any judge must see that these make the crime less grave!<sup>25</sup>

The Israelites' lament for Samson<sup>26</sup> wholly ignores the tradition which portrays him as a *figura Christi*, and its treatment of the no less traditional theme of the hero's vulnerability to feminine deceit is wholly original: rather than stress Samson's folly in succumbing to Dalilah's wiles, it dwells on the intensity of his suffering, and the disturbing fact that so noble a figure should be so inescapably doomed. By the end, "woman" has assumed the role of the fates or Furies of ancient tragedy:

Sinum aspidi vel igni prius aperi, quisquis sapis,  
quam femineis te committas illecebris, nisi malis  
ad exitium properare certissimum cum praedictis.

You who are wise, bare your breast to the serpent or to fire rather than submit yourself to feminine deceits, unless it is your choice to rush toward certain destruction like these men of old.

Even more radically heroic is Abelard's treatment of the daughter of Jephthah.<sup>27</sup> The Israelite maidens are made to recall how, learning of Jephthah's promise to the Lord, she had embraced the opportunity to die for her nation, and rebuked her father for his unmanly desire to break his vow and deny her this glory. In the final stanzas, as she repudiates the elaborate ceremony which would have arrayed her for death as if she were a bride, and takes into her own hands the sword with which her father would have fulfilled his vow, her language and her commanding presence recall Vergil's account of the death of Dido.

Though it would be a serious mistake to reduce the experience embodied in these poems to a coded version of Abelard's own, it is hard to ignore certain obvious resemblances. The generosity of spirit that informs Dinah's elegy for Shechem, and her indignation at her brothers' treachery, must surely recall the all-condoning love of Heloise, and her pained reaction to the betrayal of Abelard's good

faith by Fulbert and his henchmen. It is reasonable to see Heloise's unhesitating acceptance of the cloister in the heroic self-sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, and Abelard's endurance of mutilation and slander in the ordeal of Samson. The *Planctus* possess the autonomy of lyric, and in reading them we enter a lyric world where the quality of feeling is what matters. It is a world glimpsed tentatively at certain moments in the *Historia*, the world in which Abelard and Heloise, because of the authenticity of their love, will always enjoy an immunity from the judgments of their ignoble enemies. It is a world to which Abelard gives a certain moral legitimacy in the *Scito te ipsum*, with his compelling arguments for intention as the necessary basis for evaluating a human action. It is largely the sureness with which Abelard evokes this world and affirms its values that makes him the representative figure he has become in literary tradition, a real-life counterpart of Tristan and Aucassin, a living embodiment of the values of *fin amor*. There could hardly be a more telling comment on the limitation of these values than the detachment and irony with which Abelard the monk frames the experience of Abelard the lover, but the *Planctus* have an authority all their own, and they are our best evidence of the importance for Abelard of his encounter with Heloise.

### II.3 *The Carmen ad Astralabium*

Of the son of Abelard and Heloise, Peter Astralabe, we know only that he spent his adult life as a canon of the cathedral of Nantes. Our one glimpse of Abelard as father is the strange and tedious *Carmen ad Astralabium*, which devotes over 500 gnomic Latin couplets to advising Astralabe on study, moral duty, the nature of women, and other topics. The poem must have been one of Abelard's last writings, and we might hope to gain from it some sense of his attitude toward himself and his experience in the years since the writing of the *Historia calamitatum*. But apart from one striking passage, to be discussed below, the tone throughout is resolutely impersonal, oscillating between the moral and the purely practical without becoming either hortatory or cynical.

All manuscripts assign the *Carmen* to Abelard, but modern readers have questioned the attribution of a performance so uncharacteristically flat. The one piece of internal evidence, apart from a

few possible echoes of earlier writings, is a startling personal reminiscence, unique in the poem, which occurs in a discussion of the general value of religion. We accept the beliefs of our place and time uncritically, Abelard declares, for all men desire peace of mind, and trust in God is our assurance of this, just as the lack of such trust leaves us open to sin. It is by repenting our sinfulness before God that we become free of sin. Not all of us, however, are able to do this:

Sunt quos delectant adeo peccata peracta  
 Ut nunquam vere peniteant super hiis,  
 Ymo voluptatis dulcedo tanta sit huius,  
 Ne gravet ulla satisfactio propter eam.  
 Est nostre super hoc Heloyse crebra querela,  
 Qua mihi que secum dicere sepe solet:  
 "Si nisi paeniteat me commississe priora,  
 Salvari nequeam, spes mihi nulla manet.  
 Dulcia sunt adeo commissi gaudia nostri  
 Ut memorata iuvent que placuere nimis."

There are those whose past sins are [still] so pleasurable that they never truly repent them; indeed the pleasure they feel is so sweet that they are untroubled by any need for atonement.

Our Heloise frequently worried about this, and often spoke to me of what was in her mind: "If I cannot be saved unless I repent of my former actions, then there is no hope for me. The joys we experienced together are still so sweet that simply recalling our exceeding pleasure sustains me."<sup>28</sup>

The last few lines echo the actual words of Heloise in her second letter to Abelard (*HC* 121–122; Radice 1974, 132–133). Even if we question the attribution of the *Carmen*, or suppose these lines to be an interpolation by an imaginative reader familiar with the earlier documents, there is something uncanny about the sudden emergence of her all-too-human voice, interrupting the slow, relentless march of Abelard's elegiacs, challenging the authority of their sober sententiousness as she had once tacitly rebuked the self-absorption of the Abelard of the *Historia*. If we accept the authenticity of the passage, and read it in the light of the *Historia* and its long aftermath, we must see the lines as virtually reorganizing the *Carmen* around themselves, as Abelard's confession to Astralabe that he has failed in his spiritual ministry to Heloise, and as a final tribute to her unquenchable humanity.

## NOTES

1. See chapters 7–8 below.
2. Benton 1975.
3. Dronke 1976; Jaeger 1980.
4. Benton 1980.
5. Benton 1987.
6. Luscombe 1988.
7. Dronke 1992.
8. Köngsen 1974; Mews 1999.
9. Constable 1976, 31–35.
10. Duby 1977.
11. Clanchy 1997, 141–145.
12. Taylor 1998.
13. Pucci 1998, 185–194.
14. Bloch 1983, 141–149.
15. Irvine 1996.
16. Waddell 1987, 45–54; Mews 1995, 66–69.
17. Waddell 1987, 3–13, 54–85.
18. Waddell 1987, 27–45; Szövérfy 1975, 85–88.
19. Szövérfy 1975, 91–99.
20. Waddell 1987, 65.
21. Waddell 1987, 98.
22. Dronke 1996, 53–55.
23. Le Vot 1992, 113–116.
24. Meyer 1905, 371–374.
25. Meyer 1905, 366–367.
26. Meyer 1905, 369–371.
27. Meyer 1905, 347–352.
28. Dronke 1976, 43–44; Dronke 1992, 279–280.



### 3 Metaphysics

Abelard's philosophy is the first example in the Western tradition of the cast of mind that is now called *nominalism*. Although his view that universals are mere words (*nomina*) is typically thought to justify the label, Abelard's nominalism – or better, his *irrealism* – is in fact the hallmark of his metaphysics. He is an irrealist not only about universals, but also about propositions, events, times other than the present, natural kinds, relations, wholes, absolute space, hylomorphic composites, and the like. Instead, Abelard holds that the concrete individual, in all its richness and variety, is more than enough to populate the world. He preferred reductive, atomist, and material explanations when he could get them; he devoted a great deal of effort to pouring cold water on the metaphysical excesses of his predecessors and contemporaries. Yet unlike modern philosophers, Abelard did not conceive of metaphysics as a distinct branch of philosophy. Following Boethius, he distinguishes philosophy into three branches: *logic*, concerned with devising and assessing argumentation, an activity also known as dialectic; *physics*, concerned with speculation on the natures of things and their causes; and *ethics*, concerned with the upright way of life.<sup>1</sup> Metaphysics falls under Abelard's account of "physics" as the second branch of philosophy, which is sufficiently broad to allow for traditional metaphysical concerns as well as issues proper to natural philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Determining his metaphysical commitments is a matter of teasing them out of his discussions in philosophy of language and natural philosophy.

I'll begin with Abelard's antirealism about universals (§I), since it is the key to his irrealism. It provides the foundation for his conviction that only individuals exist, a thesis that calls for further analysis of the nature of individuals (§II). Most individuals are a kind of

integral whole, namely, a hylomorphic compound of form and matter, belonging to natural kinds. Abelard clarifies how the elements of such complex individuals are related to one another with his theory of identity (§III), and he develops a theory of how individuals interact to make up the world, using far less by way of ontological resources than other philosophers (§IV). The result is a subtle and sophisticated irrealist metaphysics, one of the most interesting and original in the history of philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

## I. ANTIREALISM

Abelard is notorious for his claim that universals are nothing but words, a thesis he defends by arguing at length that ontological realism about universals is incoherent. More exactly, Abelard holds that there cannot be any real object in the world that satisfies Boethius's criteria for the universal: being present as a whole in many at once so as to constitute their substance (i.e. to make the individual in which it is present what it is).<sup>4</sup> In his discussion of universals, Abelard echoes Boethius's own dialectical strategy by first attacking the view that the universal is a real constituent of each individual thing (§I.1), and thereafter the view that the universal is the collection of things (§I.2); to this Abelard adds further arguments against a family of views that identify the universal with the individual thing in some fashion (§I.3).<sup>5</sup> In each case Abelard tries to show that realism about universals leads to absurd consequences. I'll only review some of his objections against each position; he has much to say, not all of it of equal merit.

### I.1 *Material essence realism*

*Material essence realism*, the position of Abelard's teacher William of Champeaux, is a sophisticated version of the realism that was prevalent among philosophers at the beginning of the twelfth century. It can be summarized in three theses.<sup>6</sup> First, it holds that the material essence – that is, the genus with regard to its subordinate species, or the species with regard to its subordinate individuals – is a Boethian universal, since it is simultaneously present as a whole in distinct items, making them what they are as the “material” of their essential being: the material essence *animal* is present in the

species *man* and *ass*, the material essence *man* is present in Socrates and Plato. Second, it holds that the material essence is “contracted” (made metaphysically less general) by the addition of forms accidental to it; since it is essentially the same in distinct items, whatever differentiates those items cannot be essential to it, and hence must be accidental. For individuals, this reduces to the claim that accidents individuate substances.<sup>7</sup> Third, it holds that individuals are metaphysically composed of the material essence in combination with the forms that serve to individuate them. Hence Socrates is composed of the material essence *man* plus his particular height, weight, and so on; likewise for Plato.

Abelard offers two powerful objections to material essence realism, “a view completely incompatible with physics” (*LI Isag.* 11.10–11; Spade 1994, 28), that is, with metaphysics. The first runs as follows (*LI Isag.* 11.11–24; Spade 1994, 29; and *LNPS* 517.25–29).<sup>8</sup> Consider the material essence *animal*, wholly present in the species *man* and *ass*. In the former species it is informed by rationality, and in the latter by irrationality. Yet it is by definition the selfsame material essence that is wholly in each; indeed, that is what entitles the view to be called a form of realism. Hence contraries are simultaneously present in the (generic) material essence, which is impossible.

The defender of material essence realism might counter that contraries are not actually present in the material essence, but are merely potentially present, and thus there is no conflict. But Abelard insists that this reply doesn’t work. Each species is actually informed by a contrary, and the material essence is actually present in each as a whole; hence the material essence is actually informed by one contrary in one species and by the other in the other; since it is wholly one and the same in each, it is therefore actually informed by contraries, and the contradiction results.

Abelard takes up another rejoinder, namely, that there is only a contradiction if contraries are present in the same individual, not just in the species or genus (*LI Isag.* 11.25–28; Spade 1994, 30). He replies with a new *reductio*-argument, as follows (*LI Isag.* 11.28–12.4; Spade 1994, 31–32). Assume that individuals are to be identified with their material essences. Thus Socrates can be identified with *animal*, as likewise can Brunellus the Ass; but then by transitivity Socrates is Brunellus, and hence he is both rational (as Socrates) and irrational (as Brunellus); thus contraries are present in the same individual.

The real work in Abelard's reply is done by his identification of individuals with their material essences, which the defender of material essence realism is not likely to grant, insisting instead that the individual is the material essence only in combination with individuating forms (as described in the third thesis above). Yet Abelard argues that material essence realism is in fact committed to the view that the individual really is just its material essence. He argues for this claim by elimination, as follows (*LI Isag.* 12.4–14; Spade 1994, 33).<sup>9</sup> According to material essence realism, the individual consists in its material essence plus its advening forms. Clearly the individual cannot be identified with its accidents, since then they would not be accidents but substance. But why not think the individual is its advening forms in combination with its material essence? Abelard's background reasoning runs as follows. Such advening forms include the specific differentia for the kind of thing the individual is, e.g. rationality in the case of Socrates. The differentia cannot be merely accidental to the material essence, or it would not be a part of making the thing what it is; rationality makes Socrates human, and is not just an accidental feature. Nor is the differentia merely "co-present" in the individual: Socrates would be no more than an accidental union of a material essence and some form(s), really two things rather than one.<sup>10</sup> Yet the differentia cannot simply inhere in the material essence: it either produces something essentially different, contrary to the basic tenets of material essence realism, or, by Abelard's main argument, contraries will simultaneously inhere in the same thing. The only option remaining is to hold that the differentia is not a separate quality at all but already informs the material essence – not *rationality* but *rational animal*.<sup>11</sup> Abelard explicitly states the consequence of this last option. Since the individual is composed of the material essence and advening forms, including the differentia, then Socrates must be composed of his material essence and differentia, i.e. his material essence in combination with his informed material essence, which is absurd.<sup>12</sup> By elimination, then, individuals must be identified with their material essences, and Abelard's *reductio ad absurdum* of material essence realism in the case of individuals holds.

Abelard's second objection to material essence realism attacks its second and third tenets, that "individuals are made by their accidents": for, as Abelard says, "if individuals draw their being

from accidents, then surely accidents are naturally prior to them, just as differentiae are to the species they lead forth into being" (*LI Isag.* 13.5–15).<sup>13</sup> However, it is impossible for accidents to be prior to substance, and so material essence realism leads to another absurdity.

Abelard's second objection is not a mere terminological point. Accidents are features *of* something, characterizing their subjects in one way or another. And, precisely because they are accidental, their subjects are what they are independent of whatever accidents they possess. Yet if Socrates's individuality derives from accidents, then what it is to be Socrates depends on the accident(s) individuating him – which is just to say that they aren't accidental but essential to Socrates, contrary to hypothesis. The individuality of an individual cannot be due to some feature that depends upon or is derived from the individual itself; features of an individual cannot ground its individuality without being a constitutive part of that individual.<sup>14</sup> In fact, no medieval philosopher argued seriously for accidental individuation after Abelard proposed his objection.<sup>15</sup> Instead, they drew the moral that the principle of individuation had to be an essential constituent of the individual.

Abelard's attack on the most sophisticated form of realism in the twelfth century was taken to be decisive. Even William of Champeaux, when faced with these and other objections from Abelard, gave up material essence realism and switched to what I'll call an *indifference theory* (as detailed in §1.3 below). Yet before turning to this latter sort of theory, we need to look at Abelard's objections to another form of realism.

## 1.2 *Collective realism*

*Collective realism* takes the universal to be, roughly, the collection of its instances: all men collected together are the species *man*, all animals taken together are the genus *animal*, and so on.<sup>16</sup> Such a view seems sensible and natural when applied to natural kinds, which consist distributively in their present members; this is the sense in which there are "endangered species," for instance. Whether it can be extended to provide an account of universals, by identifying the real collection of instances as the universal, is another question. Abelard offers three reasons to think it cannot.

First, Abelard charges that collective realism is an *ignoratio elenchi*: collections are integral wholes, not universal wholes, and thereby fail to satisfy Boethius's criteria for the universal – they are common to their members as parts of the whole, not as a whole that is present in each (*LI Isag.* 14.32–40; Spade 1994, 48),<sup>17</sup> as witnessed by the grammatical fact that we say that something belongs to an integral whole rather than saying it is the whole, which would be appropriate for universals (*Dial.* 547.31–34; cf. also *LI Isag.* 15.18–21; Spade 1994, 55).<sup>18</sup> Abelard has no objection to the existence of integral wholes, as we shall see in §III below, for they do not involve any metaphysically objectionable “shared presence” (as universal wholes do). By the same token, they aren't relevant to the problem of universals.<sup>19</sup>

Second, Abelard maintains that since collections are defined extensionally, “any group of many men, taken together, would properly be called a universal” (*LI Isag.* 15.1–4; Spade 1994, 50). Extensional definition is inadequate; if all brute animals were destroyed, the Collective Realist would have no way to distinguish the species *man* from its genus *animal*.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the collective realist hasn't given any reason why the collections that are universals have to be complete. A partial collection of humans is as much a collection of humans as a complete collection; why shouldn't it count as a species?<sup>21</sup> Even setting that difficulty aside, it isn't clear what “complete” means: all presently existing humans? Past, present, and future humans? All possible humans? No answer seems satisfactory.

Third, Abelard objects that whereas universals are prior to their instances, integral wholes are posterior to their members (*LI Isag.* 15.5–18; Spade 1994, 53–54).<sup>22</sup> Consequently, wholes are destroyed whenever any part is destroyed, though a given whole may be destroyed while a part continues to exist (though of course not *qua* part).<sup>23</sup> Thus if Plato should die, the collection comprising the species *man* is destroyed, and thus its parts (such as Socrates) are no longer men – an absurd result. Even if we grant that the species now consists of all the remaining men, Socrates *qua* member of the collection has changed essentially, since the collection “constitutes his substance” (as required by Boethius's criteria) and has itself changed, an equally absurd result.

Abelard's attack on collective realism, like his attack on material essence realism, seems to have been decisive. No subsequent

philosophers in the Middle Ages tried to identify universals with collections of things.

### I.3 *Indifference theories*

Faced with Abelard's devastating criticism, William of Champeaux "corrected his theory so that thereafter he said that things were the same not essentially but indifferently" (*HC* 89–91; Radice 1974, 60). Such "indifference theories" granted that only individuals exist, and explained specific and generic sameness among distinct individuals not by recourse to a shared entity but rather by saying that such individuals are "indifferently" the same.<sup>24</sup> The universal is then identified with the real individual thing, which, in its indifferent guise, satisfies Boethius's criteria for the universal: Socrates is the species *man* in that he is indifferently the same as other men, the genus *animal* in that he is indifferently the same as other animals. William of Champeaux adopted a negative criterion, saying that distinct individuals are indifferently the same when there is nothing in which they differ; Walter of Mortagne a positive criterion, saying that distinct things are indifferently the same when there is some real thing, a *status*, in which they agree.<sup>25</sup> Their theories are realist in virtue of their claim that some real thing, namely, the individual, is a universal.

Abelard's main objection to indifference theories runs as follows. If Socrates is the species *man*, then it is Socrates who is predicated of many, and hence he is universal; conversely, if the species is identified with Socrates, then the species is not predicated of many, and hence is individual (*LI Isag.* 15.26–35; Spade 1994, 57; and *LNPS* 518.37–519.2).<sup>26</sup> No matter how indifference is explained, the identification of Socrates as the species leads to the absurd result that there is no difference between the individual and the universal.

The obvious response to Abelard's criticism is to insist that Socrates is indifferently the same as many only *qua* species, and that in himself he is completely individual.<sup>27</sup> Yet this solves nothing, Abelard points out, since the phrase "Socrates *qua* species" refers to no thing at all, or at least to nothing but Socrates, and so cannot avoid the absurd result (*LNPS* 519.27–520.6). Nor does it help to multiply contexts by suggesting that Socrates *qua* species is indifferently the same as many but *qua* individual is not the same as many;

Abelard can press the same question about what locutions such as “Socrates *qua* . . .” refer to (as well as noting that “something is not attributed to the genus in the same sense in which it is removed from the individual”).<sup>28</sup> From a metaphysical point of view, Abelard maintains, indifference theories merely serve to obscure the fact that the only real things are individuals: “If Socrates were to agree with Plato in a thing that is *man*, still the only thing that would be *man* is Socrates himself, or some other man; hence Socrates must agree with Plato either in himself or in another man,” and both alternatives are unacceptable (*LI Isag.* 16.5–9; Spade 1994, 59). An indifference theory holding that agreement takes place “in a thing,” as Walter’s positive account does, will encounter these difficulties.<sup>29</sup>

William of Champeaux’s negative criterion for sameness, where two things are indifferently the same when they do not differ in something, might seem to avoid this charge and so be an improvement: Socrates and Plato do not differ in *man*, since each is a man, and so they are indifferently the same. Abelard tartly dismisses this move: “It could also be said in this fashion that Socrates doesn’t differ from Plato in *stone*, since neither is a stone, and so no greater agreement is indicated in them in *man* than it is in *stone*” (*LI Isag.* 16.9–13; Spade 1994, 60–61). This refutation, too, was decisive. Abelard recalls that when William was compelled to give up this view, his second to be refuted by Abelard, William’s “lectures went completely to pieces, so that they could scarcely be recognized to be about dialectic at all” (*HC* 96–98; Radice 1974, 60).

## II. INDIVIDUALS

From his antirealist arguments, Abelard concludes that there are no (non-semantic) real objects in the world that satisfy Boethius’s criteria for the universal, whether as things in their own right or as real constituents of or in things. Instead, everything that exists is individual, or, as Abelard sometimes puts it, “personally distinct.”<sup>30</sup> He explains the individuality of the individual as follows (*LI Isag.* 64.20–24):

Thus we say that individuals consist only in their personal distinctness, namely, in that the individual is in itself one thing, distinct from all others; even putting all its accidents aside, it would always remain in itself



personally one – a man would neither be made something else nor be any the less a *this* if his accidents were taken away from him, e.g. if he were not bald or snubnosed.

To understand this passage properly we have to consider several topics. First, the distinctive feature of individuals is their individuality, which, as Abelard maintains here, is ontologically primitive (§II.1). Nearly all individuals, it turns out, are also form-matter composites, the exceptions being God, angels, and human beings; matter is basic and primary, whereas most forms are reducible to and supervenient upon their material components (§II.2). Hylomorphic individuals are also one type within a wide variety of integral wholes present in the world, wherein the form is the organizing principle of the parts of the whole composite (§II.3). Individuals have natures, and thereby belong to natural kinds (§II.4); their natures also set the limits of what is possible (§II.5).

### II.1 *Individuality and individuation*

Abelard countenances two criteria of individuality in the passage quoted above: (a) being one in itself; (b) being distinct from all others. As for (a), whatever is one in itself does not have the source of its unity located in some principle or cause extrinsic to it. Individuality must therefore be intrinsic to the individual. Primary substances such as Socrates satisfy (a), despite their including a good deal of complexity: Socrates is a composite of form and matter: with respect to form, Socrates is composed of essence, attributes (*propria*), and accidents; with respect to matter, Socrates is composed of his physical parts, and is related to them as an integral whole. The unity possessed by these elements is provided by Socrates himself; they constitute the unified and organized concrete individual that is Socrates, each in its own way. Nothing other than Socrates needs to be brought forth to explain why the parts or constituent elements of Socrates are what they are; what it is to be a hand depends on what it is to be an arm, and indeed on what it is to be a human being in the first place. As for (b), Abelard insists that individuals are distinct in all their features: Socrates differs from Plato in form as well as in matter.<sup>31</sup> Such primary substances are “distinct from all else” (*Dial.* 51.11–13).

Abelard denies that individuality is a formal feature of things. There is no “individual differentia” that belongs essentially to an individual, making it individual. The specific differentia is the last such distinguishing element that enters into the constitution of an individual (*Dial.* 546.28–547.26).<sup>32</sup> In the absence of an individual differentia, the individual cannot have a proper definition (*Dial.* 584.26–29). Furthermore, there is no attribute belonging to Socrates that doesn’t also characterize the species *man*, and nothing belonging to the species that doesn’t belong to some or to many men (*LI Isag.* 63.16–18 and *LNPS* 555.33–35). This claim establishes *a fortiori* that no formal feature can be responsible for the individuality of the individual. Abelard also offers several independent arguments against taking any accidental form or collection of accidental forms to be the ground of individuality: as we have seen, such accidental forms would thereby be prior to the substances in which they are to be founded; they cannot be present *per accidens* in the subjects that they render individual; if the entire collection of accidents belonging to an individual is taken to be the ground of individuality, the individual will change with every accidental change; there will be an infinite regress of accidental individuating forms; terms such as “Socrates” will be mere adjectives rather than substantives.<sup>33</sup> Even if there is a description that uniquely picks out Socrates, it does so in virtue of accidental properties that Socrates possesses contingently, presupposing rather than grounding his individuality (*LI Isag.* 63.4–18 and *LNPS* 556.1–10; cf. also *Dial.* 569.1–18). Therefore, individuality is not a formal feature of individuals.

Nor did Abelard consider individuality to be a material feature of individuals, since there are immaterial individuals, e.g. human souls, angels, God; the fact that matter does not explain individuality is compatible with material differences being grounded in the distinctness of the material individuals, of course.

Thus Abelard holds that there is no principle or cause which accounts for the individuality of the individual, or at least that there is no principle or cause other than the very individual itself, and thus there is no “metaphysical” problem of individuation at all. For Abelard, individuality, unlike generality (which is purely linguistic), is primitive and needs no explanation. Yet this does not entail that individuals themselves must be simple or incapable of further analysis.

They are paradigmatically concrete individuals, such as Socrates and Fido, and almost always hylomorphic compounds.<sup>34</sup>

## II.2 *Hylomorphism*

Abelard holds that in the mundane world, i.e. everything apart from God and angels (including fallen angels), everything is made of form and matter.<sup>35</sup> Strictly speaking, the “matter” of something is that (*a*) out of which it is made, and (*b*) in which it remains as a part (*LI Isag.* 79.5–9; *LNPS* 509.23–26 and 564.14–15; *Dial.* 415.5–6 and 575.18–36; *TC* 4.51 288.769). Flour, when made into bread, no longer retains its form as flour, and hence is not the matter of bread in the strict sense. Even so, Abelard countenances things that satisfy (*a*) as the “matter” of something in a loose sense, whether they satisfy (*b*) or not. The strict sense allows Abelard to talk about the multiplicity and variety of material parts, from bricks in houses to apples in apple pie; the loose sense allows him to speak generally of material ingredients, such as flour in bread, as well as to endorse the reductive claim that there are really only four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. These four elements are literally the building blocks, and hence the matter (in a loose sense), of the rest of the world. Abelard highlights their importance with his theory of primary and secondary creation.<sup>36</sup>

In primary creation, God created *ex nihilo* the four elements as the primordial matter for all other bodies. Initially the elements are thoroughly intermingled in a fluid chaotic mass; each element is then differentiated from the mass by the pairing of its distinctive qualities: air with moistness and lightness, fire with lightness and dryness, water with moistness and softness, earth with heaviness and hardness.<sup>37</sup> These elements are indestructible and sempiternal, out of which all else comes to be (*Dial.* 418.36–37 and 550.34–35; *TC* 3.141 and 4.40).<sup>38</sup> In secondary creation, God does not create any new matter but instead creates substantial forms that inform existing matter, differentiating it into natural kinds, perhaps by literally adding successive substantial forms: to a material body he adds life, then the power of sensation, and finally rationality, thereby producing a human being.<sup>39</sup> This process can be analyzed logically as a descent down the Porphyrean Tree, moving from general to specific features: from substance to physical substance, to living physical

substance, to rational living physical substances. But ontologically it always remains at the level of concrete individuals, from a thing to a body to an animal to a human; at no point is there an animal that isn't a fully determinate kind of animal. (Genera and species exist only in and through primary substances.) Now in order to exist a concrete individual needs a full complement of accidental forms, since Socrates must have some definite height, eye color, and the like; but these are features of the particular matter of which Socrates is made.

Abelard exploits this last insight in thinking about form-matter composition. He holds that matter and form are principles of mundane objects, and that they always exist mixed together; neither can exist without the other, although they may be conceived independently (*LI Isag.* 25.1–4 and 25.32–33; *LNPS* 565.3–5; and *TI* 72–74).<sup>40</sup> He gives a surprisingly modern twist to this Aristotelian claim. The form of a physical object is just a particular configuration of its matter: “We strictly call ‘form’ what comes from the composition of the parts” (*LI Isag.* 79.9–10; cf. also *LNPS* 565.16). The form of a statue is its shape, which is no more than the arrangement of its matter – the curve of the nose, the size of the eyes, and so on. Thus forms are *supervenient* on matter, and have no ontological standing independent of it (a claim to be made more precise after examining Abelard's theory of identity in §III below). This is not to deny that forms exist, but to provide a particular explanation of what it is for a form to inhere in a given subject, namely, for that subject to have its matter configured in a certain way. For example, the inherence of shape in the statue just is the way in which its bronze is arranged. The supervenience of form on matter in form-matter composites explains why Abelard holds that mundane things are identical with what they are made of (*Dial.* 415.26–33). With one exception.

The human soul is unlike all other souls, which are merely material.<sup>41</sup> Abelard carefully states his position in glossing Genesis 2:7 (the text in capitals is the biblical citation Abelard is commenting on):

THE LORD GOD FASHIONED MAN FROM CLAY, i.e. from moist earth, as though it were tightly packed together rather than loose; and He thus infused the soul into a body that was already created. This passage suggests that the human soul is dissimilar from all other living beings in the very

manner of its creation. For in the creation of all other living beings, God was said to have produced “the heavens and the earth” along with body and soul together – which suggests that their souls are made of those very elements. (*Hex.* 102.21–103.3)

The human soul, by contrast, is not made from the four elements (*Hex.* 104.8: *non de aliquo materiali primordio*). Abelard holds that the human soul is incorporeal, and, despite not having access to Aristotle’s discussion of the soul in *De anima* 3.5, he holds that it is incorporeal for essentially the same reason as Aristotle: the understanding doesn’t need a body in order to think, whether as an instrument or an object (*LI Cat.* 212.30–31; *LI De in.* 3.1.24, G 313.33–35; and *TI* 5).<sup>42</sup> He also believes that it is capable of existence apart from the body, and hence must be numerically different from the body and from the composite. Nevertheless, when combined with the body the result is a unified individual human being. Abelard argues that the traditional division of Substance into the corporeal and the incorporeal must be inadequate, since humans, comprising both body and soul, are strictly neither, although they are one by nature (*LI Isag.* 48.10–49.11 and *LNPS* 547.12–549.3).<sup>43</sup> And since the human soul is not supervenient on the body, Abelard concludes that the human soul is not, strictly speaking, a form at all.<sup>44</sup> Yet the human soul acts as a substantial form while it is joined to the body; if not a form, it is closely analogous to one. Abelard takes this to be the explanation of Porphyry’s remark that all things come to be either from form and matter or from the likeness of form and matter (*Isag.* 4 18.9–11): human beings are only analogous to ordinary form-matter composites, whereas all other physical objects are straightforward form-matter composites (*LI Isag.* 79.19–30, and *LNPS* 564.25–565.2).<sup>45</sup> Abelard therefore endorses hylomorphism for mundane objects, setting humans aside as a special case.

### II.3 Wholes and parts

Abelard, following Boethius (*De div.* 12.17–20, 879B), holds that there are two fundamental types of substantial wholes: (a) universal wholes, which distribute a common essence; (b) integral wholes, which embrace quantity (*IP* 6 166.6–28; *Dial.* 339.30–32 and 546.21–27).<sup>46</sup> Now (a) and (b) are distinct, as noted in §1.2 above; they

correspond roughly to the modern distinction between distributive and collective classes. Abelard has argued at length that there cannot be any non-semantic objects satisfying (*a*) in the world. However, there are wholes that satisfy (*b*), namely, integral wholes; they meet most of Boethius's conditions on commonness, failing only in that the whole is not present in each of its parts as the universal whole is said to be.<sup>47</sup> Abelard countenances many types of integral wholes: collections, no matter how their members are selected; structured composites, whether naturally unified (such as Socrates and his limbs) or artificially unified (such as the walls, floor, and roof of a house); continuous quantities that are homogeneous material "substances," namely, stuffs, such as water or gold; geometrical objects, such as lines, defined by the relative position of their parts; temporal wholes, such as a day and the hours that make it up. Yet despite their variety, integral wholes are organized around a relatively simple taxonomy, as we shall see.

Substantial integral wholes, like quantities in general, are divided into *continuous* and *discrete* (*LI Cat.* 169.4–5 and *Dial.* 71.16–18, following Aristotle, *Cat.* 6 4b20). Abelard endorses Aristotle's view that continuous wholes have parts that are connected by a shared boundary, but thinks that they should be strictly defined as wholes "whose parts are situated without any intervals" so that "there are no gaps among them," and discrete otherwise.<sup>48</sup> Abelard doesn't subdivide the category of continuous wholes any further. His examples are spatial and temporal wholes on the one hand, and three-dimensional solids on the other; the latter, consisting in lines, planes, and surfaces, are generated by points and are the real constituents of which all bodies are composed. Abelard therefore identifies homogeneous material "stuffs" (described in §11.2 above) as the paradigmatic cases of continuous wholes.<sup>49</sup> They possess no well-defined parts, but are individuated by their amounts or measures: a cup of water, a block of marble, a pound of flesh.

Abelard gives most of his attention to discrete integral wholes, that is, wholes whose parts permit separation. There are three nested types: collections, which involve only a plurality of parts; aggregations, which require some proximity among the plurality of parts; and composites, which require the aggregated parts to be combined and structured in a definite way.<sup>50</sup> Each type has distinctive features. Collections, whose parts are the members of the collection,

are the simplest kind of discrete integral whole; extensionally defined and unordered, they are as close as medieval philosophers ever came to set theory: any three cats make a collection, as do a finger and a particular whiteness.<sup>51</sup> Since the members of the collection are linked only in belonging to the collection (*Dial.* 548.13–15), their individual natures are irrelevant, a fact Abelard takes into account by typically discussing them in terms of their cardinality – a pair, a triple, a nonet.<sup>52</sup> Since collections exist only in and through their members, they are merely supervenient and add nothing to Abelard's ontology. So too for aggregations, which are collections whose members are located in close proximity, e.g. a crowd is a collection of people assembled in one place, a heap a collection of pebbles one on top of another. Such aggregations are no more than their members in a given spatial location, and thus add nothing to the world.

Composite wholes differ from collections and aggregations in requiring their parts to have some fixed structure relative to one another (*LI Cat.* 171.9–17 and *Dial.* 575.37–576.7). A house, for example, is a composite whole in which the walls must stand on the floor and in turn support the roof; a mere collection of house-parts, even a heap of house-parts, does not constitute a house (*LI Cat.* 171.15–17). In this instance the structure is artificial, but it need not be; Socrates is a composite whole with regard to his bodily limbs. All form-matter composites are therefore composite integral wholes, taking the “structure” in question to be given by the substantial form that organizes the material parts of the whole in the proper way.<sup>53</sup> Whether these composite wholes add anything to the ontology depends on what we have to say about the ontological standing of their organizing forms.

Abelard's theory of substantial integral wholes is not a pure mereology in the modern sense, since he holds that there are privileged divisions: just as a genus is properly divided into not just any species but its proximate species, so too the division of a whole must be into its principal parts (*Dial.* 548.29–31). Intuitively, some wholes have a “natural division” that takes precedence over others; a sentence, for example, is divided into words, syllables, and letters, in precisely that order (*Dial.* 67.17–22 and 548.31–36). Yet alternate divisions, perhaps yielding alternate parts, are available. There seems to be no easy way to determine what the principal parts of a given whole are, that is, which of the many possible divisions should be privileged. According

to Abelard, there were two schools of thought on the question. The *maximalists* held that parts are principal when they are maximal, i.e. belong only to the whole, not to another part; the *destructivists* held that parts are principal when the whole would be destroyed by their destruction (*Dial.* 549.4–20; cf. also *Sent.* 15 and 34–36).<sup>54</sup> Abelard finds neither position satisfactory.

Maximalism presents an easy target. Take some composite integral whole, such as a house. Its principal parts, intuitively, are the floor, walls, and roof; none of these is a part of any of the others (e.g. the floor is not part of the roof), and taken together they constitute the whole house, so the maximalist criterion seems plausible in this case. Abelard makes short work of it nonetheless. Initially divide the house into two parts, the floor on the one hand and the roof-and-walls on the other; then the roof will not be a principal part (since it is part of the roof-and-walls) and neither will the walls. Clearly, any part can be made principal or secondary by proper choice of division, and so maximalism fails (*Dial.* 549.21–34).

Destructivism faces a different challenge, namely, that by its lights every part of a given integral whole must be a principal part. Abelard reasons as follows. Take any random part of a house, say a pebble in the wall. Since wholes are defined through their parts, if the whole exists then any part of the whole must also exist (*Dial.* 343.34–35 and 550.9–13).<sup>55</sup> This is logically equivalent to its contrapositive, namely, that if any part of the whole fails to exist, the whole also fails to exist (*Dial.* 346.31–34 and 550.15–16). Thus if the pebble no longer exists, the house no longer exists. More precisely, the whole  $H_1$ , which is that very house with all its parts, including the pebble, no longer exists once the pebble no longer exists, although the distinct whole  $H_2$  (all of the parts of that very house other than the pebble) has now come into being –  $H_2$  formerly was part of  $H_1$  (*Dial.* 550.24–33).<sup>56</sup> Thus any random part of a whole is a principal part of that whole, according to the destructivist criterion, and this result is unacceptable.

In contrast to both maximalists and destructivists, Abelard proposes that the principal parts of a whole are those whose conjunction immediately results in the complete whole (*Dial.* 552.38–553.7). His intent seems to be that the nature of the composition (if any) that defines the integral whole also spells out its principal parts. A house consists of floor, walls, and roof put together in the right way; this



says nothing about the constituent sub-parts of the floor or the walls or the roof, in particular leaving it open whether each requires all of its sub-parts to be the principal part it is. Abelard's criterion therefore improves on destructivism, since the existence of the whole entails the existence of its principal parts but not necessarily any of their sub-parts. It also improves on maximalism, since it derives the principal parts from the compositional structure of the whole. Where such structure is lacking, the principal parts are just the parts as ordinarily identified. The principal parts of a collection, for example, are just each of the members of the collection, whatever may be the case with any given member's sub-parts; the principal parts of an aggregation are the members located in proximity to one another.

#### *II.4 Natures*

According to Abelard, individuals have natures, and in virtue of their natures they belong to determinate natural kinds. But an individual's nature is not something really shared with or common to other individuals; Abelard's refutation of realism has shown that this is impossible.<sup>57</sup> Nor is the nature anything in addition to the substantial form and attributes of the individual: Socrates does not have a human nature as well as his substantial form and the attributes consequent on having that form (including material properties). Instead, he belongs to a given natural kind in virtue of having a specific or generic substantial form, one completely individual to him.

Like most medieval philosophers, Abelard held that we are largely ignorant of the natures of things, by which he meant the full array of features that being a certain kind of thing may involve. We do not even know why risibility is an attribute of human beings, much less why some plants are poisonous, what makes volcanoes erupt, or how to tell dogs from foxes. It is the business of "physics" to investigate the natures of things and their causes (as noted at the beginning of this chapter). In this connection, Abelard often uses the word "nature" loosely to cover more than the individual's substantial form, instead capturing the typical material organization, behavior patterns, way of life, and so on: "Sleeping after a meal is part of the lion's nature." Presumably this kind of talk will be cashed out in the end by talk of substantial and accidental forms different kinds of things have, and Abelard's intent is usually clear from context.

But what of the precise meaning of “nature”? Abelard interprets Porphyry’s remark that “the species collects many into a single nature” (*Isag.* 3 12.15–17) linguistically, explaining that the name of the species refers to the things it does “due to their natural creation” (*ex creatione naturae*) (*LNPS* 553.29–32; cf. the parallel passage at *LI Isag.* 57.27–30). He glosses this last phrase by citing Boethius’s definition of “nature,” which he further explains as follows:<sup>58</sup>

Boethius says that nature is “the likeness of things that come into being,” as though to say explicitly that the same things are of one nature that are similar to one another by natural activity. Accordingly, we call the name “man” a nature, which is naturally common to many things in virtue of its single imposition, due to the fact that they are naturally similar to one another in that each of them is a rational mortal animal. (*Secundum mag. Petrum* 17)

By “naturally similar” Abelard means that the similarity between Socrates and Plato is not conventional, but rather a fact about the world that follows from each being human, which is itself a function of their biological history. In short, Abelard takes a natural kind to be a well-defined collection of things that have the same features, broadly speaking, that make them what they are. Why a given thing has some features rather than others is explained by how it got that way – the natural processes that created it result in its having the features it does, i.e. being the kind of thing it is; similar processes lead to similar results. On this reading, it is clear that natural kinds have no special status; they are no more than discrete integral wholes whose principle of membership is similarity, merely reflecting the fact that the world is divided into discrete similarity-classes of objects. Furthermore, such real relations of similarity are nothing themselves above and beyond the things that are similar (see §IV.1 below). In his positive account of universals, Abelard notoriously argues that there is no *thing* in which different items of the same sort agree; instead, each simply is what it is, which constitutes their agreement (*LI Isag.* 19.29–20.6; Spade 1994, 90–91).<sup>59</sup> He sometimes refers to each thing’s being as it is as its “condition” (*status*), but this shorthand carries no metaphysical baggage. Socrates and Plato are objectively more similar in what they are (namely, human) than are Socrates and Brunellus (although the latter are similar in being animals), but in itself this adds nothing to Abelard’s ontology.

The division into natural kinds is, presumably, a “shallow fact” about the world: matters could have been otherwise had God ordained them differently; fire might be cold, heavy bodies fall upwards, frogs reason. As noted in §II.2 above, in secondary creation God sorts things into natural kinds by creating inherent substantial forms. This is part of a more general process whereby God establishes “natural power” (*vis naturae*) in things to take the place of the direct exercise of His efficacious will during the six days of Creation, i.e. where the causal powers of things are implanted via their substantial forms.<sup>60</sup> (This is what allows Abelard to pass from a thing’s individual nature to the interacting system of all such things as “Nature.”) If these causal powers were different, then natural kinds might be different as well, or might not have been as sharply differentiated as they are now. Given how matters stand, natural kinds carve the world at its joints, but they are God’s chosen joints.

The upshot is that what it is to be a certain kind of thing is deeply tied in with what things of that sort are able to do. (A human being lacking rationality would not be human at all.) Abelard puts this insight to good use in accounting for real modalities.

### II.5 Possibilities and powers

Abelard recognizes that “possible” and cognate modal terms are systematically ambiguous between referring to possible states of affairs (possibilities) and the grounds for an agent’s possible acts (powers) (*LI De in.* 3.13.57, MP 181 79.9–11). The distinction between them, roughly, is that possibilities are relative to natural kinds and powers are relative to individuals. Most of Abelard’s discussion centers on the former, though he suggests that the latter may be the more basic, as we shall see.<sup>61</sup> To begin, however, let us consider each in turn.

Following a line of thought found in Boethius, Abelard analyzes possibility in terms of natures.<sup>62</sup> He presents the outlines of his account as follows:

“Possible” and “contingent” mean the same thing. For we do not here take “contingent” for what actually happens, but for what can happen, even if it should never happen, so long as the nature of the thing is not incompatible with its happening but instead permits it to happen (*dummodo natura rei non repugnaret ad hoc ut contingat, sed patiatur contingere*). For example,

when we say "It is possible for Socrates to be a bishop," this is true even though he never is one, since his nature is not incompatible with it. (*Dial.* 193.31–36)<sup>63</sup>

The nature of something determines what is and isn't possible for it. More exactly, simple modal claims are analyzed into relations of compatibility that obtain among properties and natures. These compatibility-relations are objective rather than linguistic or conventional; Abelard follows the Aristotelian tradition in identifying real forms of opposition as features of the world.<sup>64</sup> Like other relations, of course, these forms of opposition merely supervene on things that are opposed. We derive our knowledge of such possibilities from observation. We know that Socrates's nature is compatible with bishophood, for instance, because we observe that there are some men who are bishops; Abelard reasons that whatever holds for one must hold as possible for all, "for otherwise things that differ only in their accidents would differ in kind" (*Dial.* 193.36–194.5), a claim underwritten by Abelard's view that the species is the individual's nature.<sup>65</sup> Abelard's extended analysis of real opposition, while glossing *Cat.* 10–11 and explaining the topic *from opposites*, gives content to his otherwise abstract analysis of modality.

As with possibilities, so too with necessities: something is necessary if a thing's nature requires it. The necessary is thus inevitable, since it proceeds from natural requirements.<sup>66</sup> By the same token it might be thought that the possible is what can be avoided – what might be or might not be – but this straightforward equation is complicated by different senses in which something may be fixed in advance (and thereby unavoidable), or, in Abelard's preferred terminology, "determinate."<sup>67</sup> Now determinateness is not strictly a modal notion. It is grounded in epistemic facts about what is knowable or "certain" *ex natura rei* (*Dial.* 211.5–7) or *ex se ipsis* (212.15). Roughly, the nature of something spells out what it can or will do, as described above; if further epistemic conditions are met – if we can somehow know now what will take place – the event will be determinate, and if not, not.

In addition to the simple modal statements already canvassed, Abelard applies his nature-based analysis to modal sentences that have an appended condition: "It is possible that *S* is  $\varphi$  while  $\psi$ " where the subordinating conjunction might be *while*, *whenever*, *if*, *as long*

as, and so on, and in particular  $\varphi$  may be  $\psi$ .<sup>68</sup> Here the ascription of possibility is only relative to the condition. Abelard tells us in *LI De in.* (309.91, G 430.5–9) that these sentences have two readings: (i) the nature of the  $S$  that is  $\varphi$  permits it to  $\psi$ ; (ii) the nature of  $S$  permits it to  $\varphi$  and  $\psi$  together. Relative modality, like simple modality, is explained in terms of natures.

In keeping with the Aristotelian tradition, Abelard sharply distinguishes “It is possible that  $S$  is  $\varphi$ ” from “ $S$  can be  $\varphi$ ”: the latter, but not the former, ascribes a real power (*potentia* or *potestas*) to  $S$ . For the latter to be true a further constraint in addition to its possibility must be satisfied, namely, that nothing precludes  $S$  from becoming<sup>69</sup>  $\varphi$  (whether  $S$  ever becomes  $\varphi$  or not).<sup>70</sup> Given that human beings walk, then Abelard’s account of power is, intuitively, that Socrates can walk if he is not now tied to a chair, dead, legless, locked in the closet, or the like. The presence or absence of such causal factors is a matter of how the world actually is. The nature determines the bounds of possibility, the world determines the possession of power.

Abelard’s account of powers is little more than a sketch, but he returns to them in one of his few remarks to address directly the ontology of the possible. In *TSch* 3.95, he points out that even philosophers who have made a point of investigating the natures of things have concerned themselves almost exclusively with the natures of creatures in their ordinary experience, not with God’s divine power that is in command of all created natures; indeed, strictly speaking, the nature of something must comply with God’s will. As a result, “when they say that something is possible or impossible, i.e. to be compatible or incompatible with a nature, they take the measure of this according to the capacities of creatures only, not the strength of the divine power.” Absolute possibilities may be relative to the natures of (created) things, but such natures are themselves subject to God’s power; in the final analysis, then, possibilities depend on powers, though Abelard says no more about how this is to be understood.<sup>71</sup>

### III. IDENTITY

Abelard endorses the traditional account of identity, derived from Boethius, which holds that things may be either generically, specifically, or numerically the same or different (*LNPS* 535.34–41).<sup>72</sup> Yet

the distinctions represented in the traditional account are not sufficiently fine-grained for Abelard's philosophical purposes. He elaborates an original theory of identity, apparently developed in the first instance for theological problems surrounding the Trinity, but of general application.<sup>73</sup> Four kinds of identity are at the heart of Abelard's new theory: essential sameness and difference, closely tied to numerical sameness and difference (§III.1); sameness and difference in definition (§III.2); sameness and difference in property (*in proprietate*) (§III.3).<sup>74</sup> Roughly, Abelard's account of essential and numerical sameness is intended to improve upon the identity-conditions for things in the world given by the traditional account; his account of sameness in definition is meant to supply identity-conditions for the features of things; and his account of sameness in property opens up the possibility of there being different identity-conditions for a single thing having several distinct features.

### III.1 *Essential and numerical sameness/difference*

Abelard's account of essential sameness and difference is based on the twelfth-century reading of *essentia* as meaning "concrete thing", and has nothing to do with the technical notion of essence (i.e. the set of properties that make something to be what it is). He holds that *x* is essentially the same as *y* when *x* is numerically the same concrete thing (*essentia*) as *y*. Otherwise, *x* and *y* are essentially different, which happens when they are "at variance" (*dissident*) with one another.<sup>75</sup> Coreferential terms pick out essentially the same thing. For Abelard, the Morning Star is essentially the same as the Evening Star. Each of Socrates's individualized substantial forms is numerically the same concrete thing, namely, Socrates himself; hence they are essentially the same as one another and essentially the same as Socrates, though such forms are not numerically the same as each other. More generally, the formal elements that constitute a concrete thing are essentially the same as one another and essentially the same as the concrete thing of which they are the formal constituents. This conclusion fits well with traditional philosophical usage, at least in the case of substantial forms, since it is customary to say that Socrates is his essence (Socrates is what it is to be Socrates). The corresponding general thesis does not hold for parts, however. Abelard maintains that the part is essentially different

from the integral whole of which it is a part,<sup>76</sup> reasoning that a given part is completely contained, along with other parts, in the whole, and so is less than the quantity of the whole (TC 4.12).<sup>77</sup> Essential sameness, then, is fundamentally an ontological notion. In later medieval terminology, such things are really the same, the same *res*.

Numerical difference does not map precisely onto essential difference. Roughly speaking, numerical difference is a function of there being discrete “units” that can serve as sortals for enumeration, as in the case of distinct forms; it also happens when things have no part in common: they are “distinct in respect of the quantity characterizing the concrete thing in question” (TC 3.150: *adeo tota essentiae suae quantitate ab invicem discreta sunt*). This opens up the possibility that there are things neither numerically the same nor numerically different from one another (TC 3.153), as follows. The failure of numerical sameness, as characterized by Abelard, may be due to one of two causes. First, objects are not numerically the same when one has a part that the other does not have, in which case the objects are essentially different as well. Second, objects are numerically different when neither has a part belonging to the other. Numerical difference entails the failure of numerical sameness, but not conversely: a part is not numerically the same as its whole, but it is not numerically different from its whole. Thus *x* is essentially different from *y* when either (a) *x* and *y* have only a part in common, in which case they are not numerically the same; or (b) *x* and *y* do not have any parts in common, in which case they are numerically different as well as not numerically the same.

Abelard’s account of numerical sameness and difference has surprising consequences for metaphysics. Since things may be neither numerically the same nor numerically different, the question “How many things are there?” is ill-formed as it stands and must be made more precise.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the ontological standing of forms can be clarified in terms of Abelard’s theory of essential and numerical identity. Putting the human soul aside as a special case, a mundane individual’s substantial forms are essentially the same as the individual, as noted above; they are also numerically the same as that individual, since neither can be destroyed without the destruction of the other, a consequence of Abelard’s definition. They are neither numerically the same as nor numerically different from one another,

though, since one may involve the other as a constituent, as e.g. animality involves corporeality. Accidental forms are essentially the same as the individual they inform but, unlike substantial forms, they are not numerically the same as the individual; they can be created or destroyed without affecting the being of the individual. Yet accidental forms do not differ numerically from the individual they inform, since at least each has the individual's substance as its subject of inherence, and in that sense is a metaphysical "part." Indeed, forms in general are configurations or arrangements of parts of the individual, as noted in §II.2 above, and so merely supervene on the individual (or the individual's matter) while being neither numerically the same as it nor numerically different from it. Finally, like essential properties, accidental properties are numerically different from one another. Now Abelard only countenances concrete individual substances. But that is not quite to say that the forms of something cannot be distinguished from it and from one another, and Abelard's theory of essential and numerical identity allows us to explain this precisely.<sup>79</sup>

### III.2 *Sameness/difference in definition*

Essential and numerical sameness and difference apply directly to things in the world; they are extensional forms of identity. By contrast, sameness and difference in definition is intensional, roughly analogous to modern theories of the identity of properties.<sup>80</sup> Abelard holds that  $x$  is the same in definition as  $y$  when (a) what it is to be  $x$  requires  $x$  to be  $y$ , and (b) what it is to be  $y$  requires  $y$  to be  $x$ ; otherwise,  $x$  and  $y$  are different in definition.<sup>81</sup> This is a deliberately extended use of "definition," since it applies to items that lack a strict Aristotelian definition by genus and differentia: individuals, artifacts, and the like.<sup>82</sup> It is a matter not only of one thing being the other, or even necessarily being the other, but rather being such that "insofar as it is the one it requires only that it be the other, and conversely"; this connection is stronger than coextension. Abelard takes it to be even stronger than necessary coextension, for he says that *colored substance* and *corporeal substance* are necessarily coextensive but different in definition: they are necessarily coextensive since in order for anything colored to exist it must be a body, and conversely, but the one isn't part of what it is to be the other, any



more than having spatiotemporal location is part of what it is to be colored, although this too is a necessary feature for anything colored to actually exist (*TC* 3.143). Hence the formulation “what it is to be *x* requires *x* to be *y*” in the definition above.

Abelard says that this mode of identity applies strictly to the case of a single concrete thing, in which case items that are the same in definition are *ipso facto* essentially the same. The converse does not hold. A single concrete thing, such as a block of marble, can be both white and hard, but *whiteness* and *hardness* differ in definition; indeed, as Abelard sees it, things generally have diverse properties.<sup>83</sup> Although identity in definition strictly applies only to the case of a single concrete thing, we can loosely speak of two white things as being the same in definition as a straightforward extension of this mode of identity. Abelard himself relaxes the requirement that the items in question be concrete things when considering how Porphyry (*Isag.* 4 16.20–17.10) can hold that a differentia is both divisive (dividing the genus) and constitutive (constituting the species); he concludes that there is nothing about division that inherently requires constitution, nor conversely, and hence *divisive* and *constitutive* differ in definition (*TC* 3.156, *TSB* 2.4.98, and *LNPS* 559.26–29). Yet a differentia is not a concrete thing (*essentia*), which suggests that we should follow Abelard and relax the strict requirement, as in the general formulation given above.

### III.3 *Sameness/difference in property*

It might seem that the three modes of identity already discussed would be sufficient for Abelard’s philosophical purposes: two extensional modes for analyzing relations among real things in the world, one intensional mode for the features possessed by real things. Yet in *TC* 3.140–141 Abelard introduces a fourth mode of identity: sameness and difference in property. It is appropriate when something has a degree of internal complexity, particularly when it has a multiplicity of features that do or do not characterize one another. He offers a pair of examples.

First, consider a cube of marble, which exemplifies both whiteness and hardness. In this case, what is white is essentially the same as what is hard, since they are numerically the same concrete thing, namely, the marble cube. It is also clear that the whiteness and the

hardness in the marble cube differ in definition. Even so, what is white is characterized by hardness (the white thing is hard), and conversely what is hard is characterized by whiteness (the hard thing is white).<sup>84</sup> The properties of whiteness and hardness are “mixed” since, despite their being different in definition, each applies to the selfsame concrete thing (namely, the marble cube) as such and also as it is characterized by the other.

The interesting case is where something has properties that “remain so completely unmixed” that the items they characterize can be called different in property. Abelard presents an extended analysis of one example: a waxen image, such as the shape of an eagle impressed on wax by a signet ring, whose matter is the wax and form is the geometric pattern. However, since his remarks make it clear that he is presenting a purely general case of a (form-matter) composite in relation to its matter, this is how I’ll describe it.<sup>85</sup>

The matter out of which a form-matter composite is made is essentially the same as the composite, since each is the entire material composite itself. Yet despite their essential sameness, they are not identical; the matter is not the composite, nor conversely. The matter is not the composite, for the composite comes to be out of the matter, but the matter does not come to be out of itself. The composite is not the matter, since “nothing is in any way a constitutive part of or naturally prior to itself.” More precisely, the matter is prior to the composite, i.e. has the property *priority* with respect to the composite, whereas the composite is posterior to its matter, i.e. has the property *posteriority* with respect to its matter. Now despite being essentially the same, the matter is not characterized by posteriority, unlike the composite, and the composite is not characterized by priority, unlike the matter. Hence the matter and composite are different in property; the properties *priority* and *posteriority* are unmixed.<sup>86</sup>

The matter is of course what is posterior, that is, the thing that is posterior, namely, the composite; the composite is what is prior, that is, the thing that is prior, namely, the matter – two instances of Abelard’s special “what is x” locution – but the matter is not posterior, and the composite is not prior (the unvarnished “is x” locution). In keeping with the distinction mentioned in the preceding paragraph, these “what is” identities don’t “mix” the respective properties.

Abelard's analysis makes no assumptions about whether these property-bearers have any ontological standing. In his first example, the marble cube is a concrete thing, and hence is an individual. In his second example, the composite is a concrete thing, but the matter has no independent ontological standing while part of the composite – or at least no other standing than being not numerically the same as the composite (since the composite can pass away while the matter remains). Abelard offers no general guidance; presumably each case is to be decided on its own merits.<sup>87</sup> The merit of this new mode of identity is that it calls attention to cases where something has a degree of internal complexity, whatever the standing of the items said to be different may amount to. A look at two applications, one from theology and the other from philosophy of language, should testify to the subtlety and power of Abelard's account.

First, Abelard notoriously uses his theory of identity to shed light on the Trinity. The three Persons are essentially the same as one another, since they are all the same concrete thing (namely, God); they differ from one another in definition, since what it is to be the Father is not the same as what it is to be the Son or what it is to be the Holy Spirit. The three Persons are numerically different from one another, for otherwise they would not be three, but they are not numerically different from God: if they were there would be three gods, not one. Moreover, each Person has properties that uniquely apply to it – *unbegotten* to the Father, *begotten* to the Son, and *proceeding* to the Holy Spirit – as well as properties that are distinctive of it, e.g. *power* for the Father, *wisdom* for the Son, and *goodness* for the Holy Spirit. The unique properties are unmixed in Abelard's technical sense, for the Persons differ from one another in their unique properties, and such properties do not apply to God; the distinctive properties are mixed, though, in that God is characterized by each (the powerful God is the wise God is the good God).<sup>88</sup> Further than that, Abelard holds, human reason cannot go. His account is at best an analogy (*similitudo*), but one that illuminates matters while preserving the essential Mystery of the Trinity.<sup>89</sup>

Second, Abelard draws a distinction between words construed solely as physical objects (*voces*) and words construed as bearers of semantic meaning (*sermones*).<sup>90</sup> As a physical object, a word is no more than a particular non-repeatable set of vibrations in the air.<sup>91</sup> As a bearer of semantic meaning, it has a role in a norm-governed system

of linguistic practices (*institutiones*). In short, we have an instance of a physical item playing a functional role, a kind of “composite” analogous to a form-matter composite.<sup>92</sup> The properties of each are unmixed; physical and semantic properties do not characterize the same subjects. The word “animal,” for example, as a meaningful unit of language has the semantic property *predicability of many*, but as an utterance-token has the property *unrepeatability* – but the physical object is not predicable of many, and the word is by its nature repeatable.<sup>93</sup> Abelard’s theory of identity allows us to tease apart the differences between the utterance and the linguistic item, keeping their properties unmixed and freeing us from confusion.

#### IV. THE WORLD

Abelard takes Aristotle’s categories to be a guide to the fine-grained metaphysical structure of substances and accidents, although each category has to be investigated in its own terms (§IV.1); the concrete world is spatiotemporal, though what exactly this amounts to has to be worked out (§IV.2). There are causes, but strictly speaking there are neither events (§IV.3), nor propositions or “the things that are said by sentences,” namely, *dicta* (§IV.4).

##### IV.1 *Categories*

Boethius held that Aristotle’s aim in the *Categories* is to talk about the primary words signifying the primary kinds of things there are *qua* signifying them.<sup>94</sup> Abelard distinguishes signification strictly speaking, i.e. generating an understanding, from reference; he then interprets Boethius as holding that Aristotle’s aim is to talk about the most general and simple words that *refer* to the natures of things.<sup>95</sup> There are ten such words, according to Aristotle and Boethius: “substance,” “quantity,” “quality,” “relation,” “time,” “place,” “action,” “passion,” “position,” and “possession.” Abelard emphasizes that this list is *not* metaphysically privileged. As far as the natures of things are concerned, there could easily have been more or fewer categories; the rationale behind the traditional list is semantic rather than ontological.<sup>96</sup> Yet nothing Abelard says suggests that he thinks Aristotle’s tenfold division of the categories is mistaken or misdirected. Indeed, he carefully follows it as a guide to the

categorical structure of the world in all his writings. Given his practice, Abelard's comments about the natures of things and the number of categories merit a less radical reading, common to all medieval nominalists: we cannot simply read off ontology from Aristotle's categories – it is not, nor was it meant to be, a catalogue of the kinds of real things there are; the nature of each categorial item has to be investigated on its own terms, which is what Abelard proceeds to do in *LI Cat.* and the first part of the *Dialectica*.

IV.I.1 SUBSTANCE Abelard accepts the traditional identification of concrete individuals with primary substances, although strictly speaking the distinction between primary and secondary substances is really a linguistic distinction between proper and common nouns (*LI Cat.* 140.19–24).<sup>97</sup> In fact, much of what Aristotle has to say about substances Abelard explains linguistically, noting that Aristotle talks about language rather than things here, since the nature of substance is more familiar than the natures of the other categories (*LI Cat.* 139.31–37). For instance, Aristotle's claim in *Cat.* 5 2b7–8 that species are “more substance” than genera turns out, in Abelard's hands, to be a remark about how specific terms have more determinate reference than generic terms (*LI Cat.* 148.7–12). Still, when applied to things, the best description of substance is “what can exist on its own” (*per se subsistit*: *LI Cat.* 140.10–11).<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, Abelard doesn't elaborate on this claim. Primary substances, as concrete individuals, exemplify all of the traits described in §II above; Abelard adds little new in glossing Aristotle's discussion.

IV.I.2 QUANTITY Abelard accepts Aristotle's division of Quantity into discrete and continuous, but unlike Aristotle he is a committed indivisibilist with regard to continuous quantities.<sup>99</sup> Abelard reaches his position by aligning continuous quantities with Aristotle's distinction between simple and compound quantities. Continuous quantities, since continuity is defined by connections among parts, must thereby be compound, and hence made up of simple quantities: atoms for bodies, instants for times, phonetic elements for utterances (*LI Cat.* 168.31–169.2). The clearest example is the case of bodies. According to Abelard, lines, planes, and solids are generated by and made up of *points*, “although no authority says so”

(*LI Cat.* 179.27–29). More precisely, a “point” is a quantitative unit that is indivisible in itself, having no extension in any dimension, that adjoins an equally indivisible subject, namely, a physical particle (an atom).<sup>100</sup> These indivisible units are far too small to be perceived, and hence too small to be the actual units of measure we employ, but they are the foundation of all measure in the category of Quantity, and are the constituent elements of bodies (*LI Cat.* 168.5–8 and 183.1–3; *Dial.* 56.23–24, 56.31–33, and 57.15–20). Abelard does not say, but presumably these minuscule bodies are the indivisible atomic units of the four elements established in first creation.

Abelard offers two arguments to establish that lines consist in points. The first argument is suggested by Boethius (*In Cat.* 204C-D): if a line is cut into parts, then points appear at each cut, which are understood to have existed prior to the cut; but a line can be cut anywhere; hence a line consists of points everywhere (*LI Cat.* 179.41–180.3 and *Dial.* 59.6–13, ascribed by Abelard in the latter to one of his teachers).<sup>101</sup> Now it could be objected that this argument only shows that points are distributed throughout a line, not that they belong to its essence. Abelard replies that if they do not then there is no sense to be made of the claim that the line is continuous. What else would be its parts? The points of a line would have no more relevance to the line and its continuity than particles of whiteness inserted throughout the line, which is unacceptable. Thus a line must consist in points. In the second argument, Abelard reasons that if lines are made up of line-segments and not of points, then each line-segment must itself be made up of line-segments, and so to infinity; hence the length of a line would be ill-defined (*LI Cat.* 181.5–7 and *Dial.* 58.13–15).<sup>102</sup> Thus lines must consist in points. Both arguments can be generalized to establish that planes consist in lines and solids in planes.

Even if these two arguments establish that lines consist in points, they do not in themselves show that points make up lines, i.e. that an aggregate of points has length.<sup>103</sup> Abelard is aware of the difficulty. He mentions as an objection a passage in which Boethius claims that putting one point on top of another has no effect, like piling nothing on nothing (*De inst. arith.* 87.16–88.1). He also knew that the claim that points are dimensionless makes it hard to see how any aggregate of them could produce length. In the *Dialectica* Abelard tries to duck the question, pleading mathematical ignorance,<sup>104</sup> but in

*LI Cat.* he suggests that if superposition does not make a real compound, then neither would putting one point right in front of the other (*LI Cat.* 181.3–4). Abelard holds that points can be next to one another, and indeed that a line can even be constituted by two points; with this in mind he proposes that Boethius's claim that superposition "has no effect" should be interpreted as the points being stacked on top of one another "without any interval" (*LI Cat.* 181.36–38); hence Boethius is not really objecting to the composition of lines out of points, but merely noting that points with the same location do not have any length. Therefore, Abelard concludes, lines are made up of points as well as consist in them.<sup>105</sup> As for lines, so too for planes, and solids in their turn. Hence bodies consist in and are ultimately made up of atoms. Of course, this claim involves a certain amount of idealization, as Abelard recognizes; the human body, for example, has pores, and so is at best a "perforated solid"; marble and the purest gold, by contrast, seem to have no interstices at all (*LI Cat.* 183.41–184.12). But these are just refinements of Abelard's atomist account of the world.

IV.1.3 QUALITY According to Aristotle, the category of Quality includes (a) habits and dispositions; (b) passible qualities or passions; (c) natural capacities or incapacities; (d) geometrical forms and shapes. Abelard, following Boethius, raises the question whether (a) to (d) are genera or species of Quality; he argues at length, *contra* Boethius (*In Cat.* 244D–245A), that they are not (*LI Cat.* 225.21–227.2 and *Dial.* 101.5–103.18).<sup>106</sup> Abelard goes so far as to call this a mistake on Boethius's part (*Dial.* 103.5–6), and he asserts that taking them as genera or species "is repugnant to reason in every way" (*LI Cat.* 226.3). Furthermore, he asserts, Boethius knew better, since he himself laid down the axiom that a genus is always to be divided into two proximate species.<sup>107</sup> In the *Dialectica* Abelard leaves it that (a) to (d) is just a listing of various qualities. His view in *LI Cat.* is more detailed. There he argues that (a) and (c) differ not by opposites, as a division into species would require, but can even include the same things: natural talents that are developed by training, for example. Likewise, habits and dispositions cannot themselves be species (or subspecies) of Quality, since the only difference between them is how deeply implanted they are. Nor is (b) a species, but a grab-bag of effects that might be engendered in a recipient. By contrast, (c) and

(*d*), taken on their own, might properly be called species, in which case “the division of Quality will be irregular, partially by species and partially by accidents, and should really be called a list rather than a division” (*LI Cat.* 226.25–27).

Abelard agrees with Aristotle (*Cat.* 8 111a16–17) that the single common feature that applies to all and only qualities, even if the category is not well organized, is that they are like and unlike, much as all quantities are equal or unequal (*LI Cat.* 248.38–40 and *Dial.* 105.9–10). Yet sorting out Aristotle’s maxim takes some work, Abelard holds. First, he is explicit (as Aristotle is not) that it is the subjects possessing the qualities that are properly alike or not: a given body, in virtue of its particular whiteness, is similar to another white body (which is white in virtue of *its* particular whiteness); the qualities are responsible for the bodies’ being as they are, and hence for why they are like one another, despite having nothing in common (*LI Cat.* 249.11–18). Second, likeness or unlikeness seem to be qualities themselves, and so to belong to the category of Quality; many philosophers, even one of Abelard’s teachers, have thought so (*LI Cat.* 249.19–23 and *Dial.* 105.14–17).<sup>108</sup> But there is a conclusive argument to think otherwise. If likeness were a quality, then it too would inhere in each of two white bodies, since they are like one another in respect of their whiteness; but then each body also possesses the quality *likeness*, and hence is like the other body in that respect, and so there must be another likeness inhering in each; and so to infinity (*Dial.* 105.18–19). The correct conclusion to draw, of course, is that likeness is not a quality but a relation (*LI Cat.* 249.23–25). When two subjects are alike, a particular likeness will be present in each. This particular likeness is not entirely the same as the quality that grounds their likeness, since “it is possible for whiteness to exist in a subject while everything else is destroyed, in which case it isn’t called ‘like’ anything else since it doesn’t retain the likeness” (*Dial.* 106.8–10). The regress can’t get a foothold since relations don’t engender likeness among the relata. In the end, Abelard thinks that likeness isn’t really different from the things that are alike, as his theory of relations holds.

IV.1.4 RELATION Abelard follows Boethius (*In Cat.* 217B–C) in thinking that when Aristotle gives the first definition of the relative in *Cat.* 7 6a36–37 he is reporting Plato’s view, and that the second



definition in 8a31–32 is his own, correcting what Aristotle suggests are the deficiencies in Plato's account.<sup>109</sup> Roughly, Abelard holds that in their respective definitions Plato was concerned with words whereas Aristotle followed the natures of things (*LI Cat.* 217.10–13 and *Dial.* 86.14–16),<sup>110</sup> and consequently they didn't differ in their views but only in how to take "relation": Plato took it to include all permissible grammatical correlatives, Aristotle only real relations (*LI Cat.* 217.15–21; cf. also *Dial.* 91.34–92.10). Abelard's exposition and analysis of Aristotle's discussion of relatives is complicated – he has to take into account Aristotle's gradual development of his own view out of his criticism of Plato's definition – but the main lines of Abelard's own reductive account of relations are presented in his explication of Aristotle's definition.<sup>111</sup> Socrates is the son of Sophroniscus; suppose that he is taller than his father. Whether fatherhood or tallness is at issue, the items related to one another are the grounds or subjects (*fundamenta vel subiecta*) of the relations: Socrates and Sophroniscus. The relation itself, *fatherhood*, and its converse relation *sonship*, strictly belong to Relation, as whiteness does to Quality; and just as the inherence of a particular whiteness in Sophroniscus is what it is for him to be white, so too the inherence of a particular fatherhood in Sophroniscus is what it is for him to be a father (which requires the simultaneous inherence of a particular sonship in Socrates). Again, just as a particular quality is a *quale*, Abelard calls a particular relation a "respect" (*respectus*), since it is that in virtue of which one thing is taken with respect to another, i.e. is relative to the other. Finally, in addition to the subjects and the respects in which they are related, there are the features due to which the relation obtains: the particular heights of Socrates and Sophroniscus, for instance.

Abelard seems to countenance sheer ontological extravagance when he raises the question whether there are distinct particular fatherhoods in a man who has several sons (*LI Cat.* 218.32–219.20 and *Dial.* 89.20–31). He argues that each time a man has a son, a new respect is made that wasn't there previously, since now the man is a father in virtue of his particular relationship to that son; even were all the other sons to die, he would continue to be a father, since he is the father of this son. There are thus as many particular fatherhoods as there are sons (and sonships). Since this line of argument is perfectly general, it follows that there is always a particular

respect in virtue of which subjects are related, when they are related. When Socrates is taller than Sophroniscus, there is a particular respect, namely, the particular case of *taller than Sophroniscus* that Socrates has, in virtue of which they are related; this respect no longer exists when Sophroniscus grows taller or no longer exists, although everything else about Socrates, including his height, could remain unchanged. Yet it is one matter to recognize that things are multiply related by distinct instances of the same kind of relation, another to think that some multiplication of entities is taking place. Abelard never calls respects “things” (*res*), though he does so term their subjects. Furthermore, something must have certain respects if other conditions are met. Given the particular heights of Sophroniscus and Socrates, Socrates will be taller with respect to Sophroniscus, and Sophroniscus shorter with respect to Socrates. But then these two relations supervene on Socrates, Sophroniscus, and their heights, and are not independent of them. (Indeed, Socrates is not really distinct from his height, as we have seen in §11.2 above.) Abelard reminds us that in speaking of relations “things don’t differ the way names do” (*Dial.* 88.19–20). The respect in which Socrates is taller than Sophroniscus is essentially the same as Socrates, but neither numerically the same as nor numerically different from him; we can identify it ontologically as his height, which sometimes is a respect in which he is taller than Sophroniscus, and sometimes not, as when Sophroniscus no longer exists. Distinct respects are different in definition, which does not necessarily entail ontological multiplicity.

IV.I.5 ACTION, PASSION, POSITION, POSSESSION Abelard complains that Aristotle only described the first four categories in any detail, namely, Substance, Quantity, Quality, and Relation; as a result, less is known about the remaining six categories. In fact, Abelard’s treatment of the final four categories, namely, Action, Passion, Position, and Possession, is as perfunctory as Aristotle’s (*Dial.* 80.30–81.6; cf. also *LI Cat.* 251.27–38 and 256.8–11). Abelard excuses himself on the grounds that Aristotle himself asserted that these last categories were obvious (*Cat.* 9 11b10–11), at best a weak excuse (*LI Cat.* 256.8–11). But whatever his reason, Abelard declines the opportunity to explore fertile ground left untouched by Aristotle, with an important exception: space and time. These categories hold

a privileged place in Abelard's scheme of things. Following Boethius, Abelard holds that in addition to the four Aristotelian causes, which are strictly principles of things, there are two principles *per accidens*, namely, space and time, "in that everything that comes to be or exists is in space or in time" (*LI Isag.* 33.26–30; cf. also the reference in *LI Cat.* 290.14–16).<sup>112</sup> Thus space and time have a privileged position in metaphysics and demand a closer look.

#### IV.2 *Space and time*

Strictly speaking, Aristotle does not have a category for either space or time. Instead, he treats them initially as types of continuous quantities, and then again in the categories of Where and When, although these categories refer not to space or time precisely but to location in each. Yet in each case space and time are accidents, that is, dependent entities characterizing the items that have them: Socrates has his own space (think of him as "taking up" room) and his own time (think of his age), a view sharply different from modern Newtonian conceptions of space and time as absolute or substantival entities that function as containers for things and events. Aristotle's full theories of space and time are developed in the *Physics*, of which Abelard knew next to nothing; with only the sketchy material in the *Categories*, however, Abelard develops his own account of space – more precisely, of place – and time.

IV.2.1 SPACE Abelard distinguishes two conceptions of place, which he calls "quantitative" and "substantial" place (*Dial.* 79.3–6), corresponding to the difference between space conceived as a quantitative feature of a body on the one hand, and as a feature relating that body to its surroundings on the other (roughly the place it is in). The former is defined as "the quantity strictly surrounding a quantitative body or some part of it" (*LI Cat.* 189.5–6), where by "strictly" Abelard seems to mean "most closely."<sup>113</sup> A solid body has its place surrounding and circumscribing it; likewise its constituent elements – surfaces, planes, lines, and points – each has its own place, and, just as bodies are built up from the atoms corresponding to indivisible points, so too are places built up from the "atomic places" of each atom; the resulting compound places are therefore continuous wholes.<sup>114</sup> A compound quantitative place is closely linked to the

solid body it characterizes; it is, roughly, the boundary layer immediately next to the outermost surface of the body. In short, Abelard has a volumetric conception of the place of a body.

Substantial place, by contrast, is a relational feature of something that explains where it is: Rome, the theater, home (*Dial.* 79.4–6); perhaps even outside (*LI Cat.* 257.25–30). It is clearly not the same as quantitative place, since that remains the same even after moving from one city to another (*Dial.* 79.14–15). Presumably each of these “locations” has been defined by quantitative place, or a generalization of quantitative place, as e.g. a city includes everything inside its boundaries, a theater or house everything inside its walls. A substantial place, then, is defined quantitatively and then as an aggregate whole. The real cash-value in Abelard’s introduction of substantial place isn’t a new kind of “place” (contrary to his own suggestion), but the *relational* fact of one thing being “in” another, each of which is defined quantitatively.<sup>115</sup>

Abelard therefore has the two fundamental components of a relational theory of space, namely, (a) place defined in terms of things, and (b) spatial relations between things. Now Abelard has only a limited version of (b), since his account doesn’t make use of all spatial relations (such as *to the left of*) but only one, namely, containment; he clearly takes this single relation to be sufficient, however, since he is careful to point out exactly how far it can be applied: the firmament is not contained within any larger place, and hence the question of spatial location makes no sense for the world as a whole (*Dial.* 79.27–28).<sup>116</sup> Containment is also a one-many relation in that a given substantial place can have many things in it. If we permit Abelard to define arbitrary regions around things, then he has a complete relational theory of space.<sup>117</sup>

IV.2.2 TIME Time is altogether more problematic than space. Abelard is a temporal indivisibilist, holding that “compound times” such as hours, days, months, or years consist in and are composed of instants (*LI Cat.* 184.34–38 and *Dial.* 62.12–15). But he rejects the view that time is something independent of things “timed,” so to speak; it is rather “a given quantity according to whose duration (*permanencia*) the existence of anything whatsoever is measured out,” as for example when we say that something was alive for a year (*LI Cat.* 184.30–34). Much as quantitative place is (intuitively) the amount of

space something takes up, so too “time” as a quantity is the amount of time something takes up or lasts – think of “age” or “duration”: an age is clearly the age of something, an accidental adjunct of the thing it characterizes, like Abelard’s (and Aristotle’s) “time.” The time (age) of something is clearly accidental to it, since *what* something is differs from *how old* it is. Time is accidental in a stronger sense, too, for things that are currently temporal need not always be in time. Just as space is a finite artifact, created by God, so too is time: Abelard holds that time began when the world was created, and will end once God transfers everything to eternity, where things exist without temporal attributes (*LI Cat.* 189.1–2).

In the *Dialectica* Abelard holds that everything has within itself its own times by which it is measured. The parallel with age is again helpful: Socrates has an age that is suitable to him, Plato his own suitable to him; an instant is a personal “atom of age” for a given individual out of which compound times, such as days, are made for each thing. These “personal days” are then coordinated and synchronized by reference to sidereal time, the movement of the sun across the heavens (*Dial.* 62.17–31).<sup>118</sup> But in *LI Cat.* 185.6–19 Abelard rejects this view, reasoning that while individuals may have individual times, these individual times need not be personal in the sense described; they can each have the standard unit-measure of (say) a day, so that the age of any given thing is constructed from common units. (Common in the sense that they are the same units for all, not that they are literally shared.) Socrates and Plato have different ages, but each has the age he has by having the duration he has, measured out in common units; ages are personal while days are common. Now some philosophers saw a difficulty in taking an instant to be indivisible if it were present to the whole world at once, and indeed in many different individuals simultaneously (*LI Cat.* 186.15–17). Abelard replies that the simplicity of an instant refers to its not having parts, in particular successive parts, and so its distribution in many individuals need not compromise its indivisibility; just as a human is a unity despite having multiple limbs, so too an instant can be a unity despite having multiple individual subjects (*LI Cat.* 186.20–26). This sidesteps the difficulties facing coordination and synchronization of separate individual times, although it threatens to make time quasi-substantival by treating a “day” as a compound largely independently of Socrates’s day-long duration. Abelard seems

to sense this threat, suggesting that perhaps time-bound individuals have some temporal aspects but that time is an extrinsic measure, the way height is (*LI Cat.* 185.19–186.14 and 186.18–20). He nevertheless insists on the link to sidereal rotation as a way to preserve the relational aspect of time, just as the link to the firmament preserves the relational aspect of space.<sup>119</sup>

Time is therefore a compound whole assembled from individual instants that are the same for all. More exactly, any temporal stretch will be such a compound whole. Abelard maintains further that temporal wholes are continuous: the present instant is the shared boundary between the past and the future, and the successive instants of the present follow on one another “like flowing water” without gaps.<sup>120</sup> (He asserts but does not try to prove this.) The three terms of McTaggart’s A-series, “past,” “present,” and “future,” are the fundamental relational properties that hold for things: they locate something *in* time, describing when it occurs, providing a categorical “substantial when” as a counterpart to the quantitative time described above. So too for more determinate terms like “yesterday” or “next month,” which are the types of time when something occurs (*LI Cat.* 256.26–32; cf. also *Dial.* 78.3–18).<sup>121</sup>

Abelard stresses that temporal wholes are radically different from ordinary integral wholes.<sup>122</sup> For an ordinary integral whole, the existence of the whole entails the existence of its (principal) parts, as described in §II.3 above. But this seems false for temporal wholes. For example, a day consists of twenty-four hours; if the first hour exists, then the day is said to exist, although none of its other parts do – in fact, all its other parts must fail to exist when any given part exists, since if the day exists then exactly one part of it exists. Now each hour of the day is on an equal footing with any other hour, and hence either all or none of the hours must be a principal part; no matter which of the competing criteria we adopt (maximalist, destructivist, or Abelard’s), the hours of a day will all qualify as principal parts. Worse yet, strictly speaking only an instant of a given hour exists, so the first hour of the day itself is a temporal whole made up of largely non-existent parts. But we cannot speak of a whole most of whose parts are non-existent. Abelard concludes: “The truth of the matter is that we can never truly and strictly say that a day exists, or that it is a whole, or a quantity, or even anything at all” (*LI Cat.* 187.40–188.1). Such temporal constructs are perhaps *like* wholes: they are

“quasi-wholes” (*Dial.* 554.35), or mere “fictitious substances” to which we attribute “fictitious properties” (*LI Cat.* 176.4–5). Likewise, “‘past’ and ‘future’ are names of things that do not exist” (*Dial.* 63.22–23), and strictly speaking “past time” or “future time” is as oxymoronic as “dead man” (*Dial.* 63.30–32). In short, Abelard is a “presentist”: only the present exists, although past times did exist (they just exist no longer) and that future times will exist (but they do not yet exist). Abelard is not rejecting the reality of time so much as calling attention to the fact that existence is tied to the present instant alone.

### IV.3 *Causes and events*

Abelard knows little more than the bare outlines of Aristotle’s doctrine of the four causes.<sup>123</sup> The material cause and the formal cause were discussed in §II.2 above, and Abelard devotes only a brief paragraph to the final cause, identifying it as the reason something is done, e.g. a war is fought for the sake of victory. He gives most of his attention to efficient causality, loosely described as whatever “acts or works where something, namely, the effect, is brought forth” (*Dial.* 414.23–24). Abelard’s main concern is to clear up what he regards as a common and unfortunate error about efficient causality, the view that we can bring (natural) substances into being. For substantial generation is strictly God’s province, and indeed is better described as “creation”; human beings can only rearrange existing materials, as in manufacturing, or initiate processes that continue through natural or Divine means, such as childbirth or growing crops (*Dial.* 416.31–417.37 and 418.21–23; *LI Cat.* 298.28–299.5; and *Hex.* 10.22–11.8). (Given God’s role in creating Nature, natural means are, in some sense, Divine means.) Even complex technical processes, such as making glass or smelting metals, do no more than manipulate materials and exploit natural processes. But this claim is not symmetric. Human beings cannot create substances, but they can destroy them; we can burn a tree to ashes, kill living creatures, and, in general, make things worse off than they are (*Dial.* 418.23: “corruption seems to be left up to us”).

Causes are not identifiable as any particular kind of thing; indeed, they may not be things at all, as Abelard is at pains to argue. Someone might be whipped for not wanting to go to the market, hanged for a

past theft or go to war for future glory, die from not eating, be damned for not doing what he ought; the absence, present nonexistence, lack, and privation identified as the respective cause of each outcome are not real things (*LI Isag.* 20.11–12, Spade 1994, 92; *LI Cat.* 293.21–35; *LI De in.* 3.04.36–37, G 368.40–369.11).<sup>124</sup> This seems correct, at least as far as ordinary usage goes. What Abelard does not provide is a theory of causation. He was perhaps skeptical that there could be such a theory, given our ignorance of the natures of things and the diversity of what might count as a cause, but he does not argue for that position either. Yet even in the absence of a theory of causation, Abelard's examples suggest that causes need be nothing over and above the items involved in causal interaction. In particular, nothing Abelard says about causation requires us to postulate events, states of affairs, or facts.

A standard reason for postulating events is the claim that things in the world are linked together in various ways: Socrates's throwing the ball, an event, is the cause of Plato's jumping aside, another event. Socrates is not the cause but rather his throwing the ball is, though we may (misleadingly) identify him as such, e.g. when we say that Socrates, due to his throwing the ball, was the cause of all that followed. But Socrates's throwing the ball is not a thing in the world the way Socrates is, though it somehow includes Socrates as a constituent. It is instead another kind of entity altogether, an event. We can generalize this notion to include relationships that may be non-causal in nature, such as Socrates's being taller than Plato; these are states of affairs. Even if we reject any real causal connections in the world, states of affairs seem to exist. Furthermore, states of affairs may obtain or not. Socrates may be taller than Plato, or he may be shorter; each seems equally a (possible) state of affairs. Let us say that states of affairs that obtain are facts. It might then seem that the world consists of facts, not things, although things are "constituents" of facts.

Abelard rejects this line of reasoning. An event such as Socrates's throwing the ball is no more than a particular accident from the category of Action, namely, *throwing the ball*, inhering in him at a given time. There is no need to postulate anything over and above Socrates and his accidental features, whatever ontological status they may have. So too for states of affairs: Socrates's being taller than



Plato is just Socrates and Plato and their respective heights, as noted in the discussion of Relation in §IV.1. We can talk as though there are events or states of affairs, but they are nothing apart from the concrete individuals that make up Abelard's world.

That said, it should be noted that Abelard does use the term *eventus* in his discussion of future contingents.<sup>125</sup> But there are reasons not to translate this as "event," with its accompanying philosophical baggage. Abelard typically speaks not simply of an *eventus* but instead of the *eventus rei* or *eventus rerum*, such as a sea-battle.<sup>126</sup> But not tomorrow's sea-battle, or yesterday's: he is talking about the present sea-battle, the sea-battle as it takes place. Thus the *eventus* of the sea-battle does not refer to the event of which the sea-battle is a part, but to the *occurrence* (or "obtaining") of the sea-battle. But the occurrence of the sea-battle is nothing other than the sea-battle, just as Socrates's existence is nothing more than Socrates: neither the occurrence nor his existence outlasts or is outlasted by its subject. And the sea-battle itself is nothing but the ships and sailors and their doings.<sup>127</sup> Hence Abelard's use of the term *eventus* doesn't commit him to the existence of events, or anything beyond concrete individuals.

#### IV.4 *Dicta*

Abelard argues that sentences (*propositiones*) must signify more than just the understandings of their constituent parts. First, a sentence such as "Socrates runs" somehow deals with Socrates and with running, not with anyone's understandings. We talk about the world, not merely someone's understanding of the world. Second, "consequential sentences" (*consequentiae*) like "If there is a man, there is an animal" are false if taken to be about understandings, for someone could entertain the concept *man* without entertaining the concept *animal*, and so the antecedent would obtain without the consequent. Third, understandings are evanescent particulars, mere mental tokenings of concepts. But at least some consequential sentences are necessary, and necessity can't be grounded on things that are transitory, and so not on understandings.<sup>128</sup> Sentences must therefore signify something else in addition to understandings, something that can do what mere understandings cannot. Abelard describes this as

signifying what the sentence says, calling what is said by the sentence its *dictum* (plural *dicta*).<sup>129</sup>

Intuitively there is much to recommend Abelard's move. Sentences are typically used to say things about the world, not about people's thoughts (except insofar as their thoughts are part of the world), and what is said doesn't seem to be as transient as the saying of it. Furthermore, sentences aren't true or false as such, but only true or false in virtue of saying what they say: "Socrates is running" is true because what it says, namely, that Socrates is running, is so in reality (*LI De in.* 100, G 327.20–21; *LI Top.* 225.25–29 and 226.28–29; and *Dial.* 156.22–33). So too for why sentences are judged necessary or possible, or opposed to one another (*LI De in.* 3.04.26, G 367.13–20). We can even explain the truth-conditions for (say) consequential sentences in terms of what their constituent parts say, so that a consequential sentence is true when it cannot be as the antecedent says unless it is as the consequent says (*LI De in.* 3.04.25, G 367.2–5; and *Dial.* 155.25–38). Finally, what sentences say can be the same even though the sentences differ syntactically. To the modern philosophical ear, Abelard's *dicta* sound very like propositions, abstract entities that are the timeless bearers of truth and falsity, possibility and necessity. Is this what Abelard has in mind by the *dictum* of a sentence?

Abelard declares repeatedly and emphatically that *dicta*, despite being more than and different from the sentences that express them, have no ontological standing whatsoever. In the short space of a single paragraph he says that they are "no real things at all" and twice calls them "absolutely nothing."<sup>130</sup> In a way they underlie sentences, but they aren't real things: *quasi res propositionum, cum tamen nullae penitus essentiae sint* (*LI De in.* 3.04.26, G 367.12–13). For although a sentence says something, there is not some thing that it says (*Dial.* 160.33–34).<sup>131</sup> In modern terms, Abelard denies the existence of propositions; he refuses to reify what sentences say. A *dictum* can be the cause of a sentence's truth without being a thing, since causes can literally be nothing at all (as noted in §IV.3 above). Even if *dicta* are about the world in some fashion, things in the world are not parts or constituents of *dicta*, which gain no ontological foothold through them.

Abelard argues for his irrealist view by showing that to think of what a sentence says as a "real thing," abstract or concrete, involves a

serious confusion about the semantic properties of sentences. This is clear, he reasons, especially in the case of consequential and negative sentences, since they may be true even if the concrete things they seem to concern have been destroyed: "Socrates is not in the house" can be true even if Socrates doesn't exist, and "If there is a rose, there is a flower" is true whether there are any roses or not (*LI De in.* 3.04.21–22, G 366.16–30). But the semantic confusion is there even if we focus on simple affirmative categorical sentences like "Socrates is a man." Such sentences seem to be directly about Socrates. Yet Abelard maintains that they too do not require us to bring in any object or entity to explain how they function and why they hold, for the simple reason that sentences are not names:

Now "Socrates" signifies him because he is Socrates, but it still doesn't say that he is Socrates, as "Socrates is Socrates" does; accordingly, a sentence's *dictum* differs from a name in this regard, namely, that the sentence says "Socrates is Socrates" (which isn't any real thing), whereas "Socrates" doesn't say this even though it refers to Socrates (because he is Socrates). (*LI De in.* 3.04.23, G 366.35–40)<sup>132</sup>

The semantic job of sentences is to *say* something, which is not to be confused with naming or denoting some thing. It is instead a matter of "proposing" how things are, so long as this is not given a realist reading:

Furthermore, it's clear that the things sentences say aren't *real* things, since their predication can't be applied to any real thing – of what things can it be said that they are "Socrates is a stone" or "Socrates is not a stone"? If sentences were to denote or put forward real things, then surely they would have to be names. But sentences differ from all words precisely in this regard, namely, that they propose something to be (or not to be) something else. Yet "being (or not being) some real thing" is *not* any real thing at all. Thus sentences do not simply denote any real things, the way names do, but instead propose how they stand towards one another, namely, whether they are suitable to one another or not. Then they are true when it is so in reality as they state, and false when it is not so in reality. And surely it is so in reality as a true sentence says, but there isn't any real thing that it says. Accordingly, a sort of "way things stand" is expressed by sentences; they don't denote any real things. (*Dial.* 160.23–36)<sup>133</sup>

Sentences say things, and they even say things about things – better: sentences say how things stand – but they do not refer to or denote

things, whether ordinary things like Socrates or extraordinary entities like propositions (which then “correspond” to things), despite the fact that we can and do refer to *dicta*. Abelard is even hesitant in speaking of a “way things stand,” immediately hedging this “way” (*modus*) with “sort of” (*quasi*) to take away any ontological bite it might have. There is no more need for a realm of special entities, propositions, to account for the fact that sentences say things than there is for a realm of promises that are embodied when somebody makes one, or timeless platonic resolutions waiting for a committee to pass them.

Instead, Abelard reasons, semantics should tell us what a given sentence says, not metaphysics. It is properly the business of “logic” to look into the meaning of words, and of “physics” to investigate whether the world is in agreement with the statement; each enterprise is necessary to the other (*Dial.* 286.31–35). Abelard only gestures at the compositional nature of semantics, which begins with single words and combines them into expressions whose sense is a function of their constituent parts (*Dial.* 287.1–4), but he wrote hundreds of pages on the precise logical behavior of words, phrases, quantifiers, and so on, all of which is used in determining what it is a given sentence says. The most we can say in general is that sentences express how things are.

Real things do have an impact on sentences, not as what they say but determining whether what they say is true or false. A sentence is true if it is in reality as it says it to be; concrete individuals are truthmakers for sentences, and nothing is required beyond them.<sup>134</sup> Simple affirmative sentences are true when things are as the way the sentence says they are, or, roughly, in virtue of the existence of things that are as the sentence says, and relational sentences likewise; consequential or necessary sentences are true in virtue not of the mere existence of things but how their natures are, so that e.g. “If there is a rose, there is a flower” is true depending on the natures of roses and flowers.<sup>135</sup> Whatever difficulties there may be in spelling out the truth-conditions for a given sentence or type of sentence, they are not, in the end, metaphysical difficulties. Sentences, and what they say, are made true or false by the ways things are, which is no more than the things themselves. From a metaphysical point of view, there are no *dicta*.<sup>136</sup>

## NOTES

1. Boethius, *In Isag. maior* 1.3 140.18–141.19, following an old Stoic tradition (Diogenes Laertius 7.39–41); see also *In Cat.* 161B–C (by implication), *De top. diff.* 1.5.50 15.3–5, *In Cic. Top.* 1044C–1045B, and the rather diffuse discussion in *In Isag. minor* 1.3 8.1–9.12. The same tradition is reported by Augustine in *De civ. Dei* 8.10. Abelard's remarks are found in *LI Isag.* 1.7–11; *LI Top.* 289.40–290.2 and 316.1–14; *LNPS* 506.18–23; and *TC* 2.31; he distinguishes logic from physics in *Dial.* 65.18–19 and 286.31–287.5.
2. Abelard's account is reminiscent of Aristotle's claim that metaphysics is generally the knowledge of the causes or principles of things (*Metaph.* A.1 981b27–28). Abelard knew "metaphysics" only as the name of a work by Aristotle in which he discussed the categories more deeply: *LI Cat.* 251.30–32 and *Dial.* 81.2–4. His knowledge derives from Boethius's asides at *In Cat.* 252B–C (cited in *LI Cat.* 239.33–240.6) and 262A.
3. Abelard's positive account of universals as words and his account of linguistic modalities – properly parts of "logic" rather than "physics" – are dealt with elsewhere in this volume, in the chapter on his philosophy of language (chapter 4 below).
4. Boethius, *In Isag. maior* 1.10 161.16–22 and 162.16–163.3, an account parallel to *In Cat.* 164C–D (taken from Porphyry's *In Cat.* 62.19–33). Abelard's solution to the problem of universals depends on what he calls "transference": the literal presence of a universal in each object exemplifying it is "transferred" to the semantic properties of certain words, namely their predicability, so that e.g. common nouns refer to each of their subjects as a whole. See Jacobi's discussion in chapter 4 of this volume.
5. See *LI Isag.* 10.15–16, 31.23–31; Spade 1994, 22, 171–172; and *LNPS* 528.28–529.21 for Abelard's understanding of Boethius's strategy in the latter's *In Isag. maior* 1.10 161.15–163.5. These views are "realist" in virtue of identifying the universal with some real thing or things said to satisfy Boethius's criteria.
6. Abelard describes Material Essence Realism in *HC* 85–89 (Radice 1974, 60), *LI Isag.* 10.17–11.9 (Spade 1994, 60), and *LNPS* 515.14–31; see also Pseudo-Joscelin *De generibus ac speciebus* 33 and Walter of Mortagne, *Tractatus "quoniam de generali,"* 2–3.
7. This second thesis derives from Boethius, *De Trin.* 1 168.56–63 and 2 169.83–89; it was widely accepted in the early Middle Ages. Abelard ascribes it to William of Champeaux in *Dial.* 541.24–37 (the only clear reference to William in that work).

8. See also Pseudo-Joscelin *De generibus ac speciebus* 39; Walter of Mortagne, *Tractatus "quoniam de generali"* 17.
9. Geyer's text and apparatus are faulty here; the manuscript is as follows: "Quod verum sit autem id quod supra assumpsimus, scilicet quicquid est in Burnello aliud a formis Burnelli est Burnellus, inde manifestum est, quia neque formae Burnelli sunt Burnellus, cum iam accidentia essent substantia, neque materia simul et formae Burnelli sunt Burnellus, cum iam corpus et iam corpus esse corpus necesse esset confiteri" (MS Milan Biblioteca Ambrosiana M63sup fol.2<sup>va</sup> 47–51).
10. See *LI Isag.* 80.22–81.5 and *LNPS* 566.7–27 for Abelard's arguments against the mere co-presence of the differentia.
11. Abelard tells us that William of Champeaux held that "when the name of the differentia is put for the species in the division of a genus, it isn't taken from the differentia but instead is put as a substantive name for the species" (*Dial.* 541.34–36), with the result that "*rational* is equivalent to *rational animal*" (541.29–30).
12. Socrates is a rational animal, that is, a rational animate body; hence he is essentially a body. But the differentia "*rational*," by the argument given above, is not the name of a quality such as rationality but rather the name of the species, rational animate body. Since Socrates is his material essence plus his differentia, he is therefore body (his material essence *animate body*) and something already body (his differentia *rational animate body*) – an impossibility: see the text in n. 9 above.
13. Aristotle raises a similar objection in *Metaph. Z.*13 1038b23–27; see also *LI Isag.* 64.7–65.5 for a fuller attack on accidental individuation. Abelard takes the sense of "naturally prior" used in his objection from *Cat.* 12 14a29–30: *x* is prior to *y* if *y* depends on *x* for its being, but not conversely; this is Aristotle's second mode of priority, which he calls "the prior by nature" at 14b15. Abelard's gloss of this later passage in *LI Cat.* 288.4–5 explicitly recognizes that such dependence doesn't require the preceding existence in time of what is prior, which sidesteps the difficulty that no ordinary substance can exist without accidents.
14. Abelard's objection can be applied, for example, to the modern identification of individuals with chunks of space-time. Abelard would hold that the path traced in the four-dimensional space-time continuum either itself constitutes an individual (in which case any path arbitrarily selected would do), or, if not, illegitimately relies on the individuality of the individual who is tracing out the given path: we look to see what places Socrates occupies at distinct times, thereby appealing to his individuality; and this we cannot do.

15. Abelard's objection says nothing against the epistemic claim that we discern or distinguish individuals through their accidental features, which most medieval philosophers, including Abelard, continued to endorse.
16. Collective realism is expounded and defended in the *De generibus ac speciebus* of Pseudo-Joscelin. Abelard describes it in *LI Isag.* 14.7–17 (Spade 1994, 41–62); see also the brief remarks in John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* 2.17.27; *Compendium logicae* 3.29 50.41–52; *Ars Meliduna* 219<sup>ra</sup> 40–42. Some inspiration may have been derived from Porphyry, *Isag.* 3 14.7–11, and Boethius's *In Isag. maior* 3.12 236.16–237.23. Collective realism is not a form of twelfth-century set theory or mereology: such collections exist in and through their members and do not include their parts (the parts of animals do not belong as such to the collection of animals).
17. There is a similar objection in *Ars Meliduna* 219rb2–4. The distinction between integral wholes and universal wholes is well-entrenched in twelfth-century philosophy, deriving from Boethius, *De div.* 12.17–14.20 (879B–880A). Pseudo-Joscelin rejects Boethius's criteria for the universal in *De generibus ac speciebus* 134–135, claiming that Boethius put them forward “where he proves that genera and species do not exist, which can only be proved by sophistry” (134).
18. Abelard develops the point from Boethius, *De div.* 14.12–15 (879D).
19. Pseudo-Joscelin argues that the collection is “in” the individual in the same manner in which we say that Socrates is touching a wall although only his fingertips are literally in contact with it (*De generibus ac speciebus* 89–93), and the collection is thereby wholly present in each member. Abelard counters that Socrates would be said of his parts in the same way, making him a universal too (*LI Isag.* 14.40–15.15.1; Spade 1994, 49)!
20. Pseudo-Joscelin avoids this objection by defining his collections intentionally, made up not of individuals but of their individualized forms: the species *man* is the collection containing the individualized form of humanity that Socrates has, the (distinct) individualized form of humanity Plato possesses, and so on; the genus *animal* the distinct individualized form of animality each animal possesses (*De generibus ac speciebus* 85).
21. This objection points to a deeper problem, namely whether an individual (Socrates) is what it is (human) before being part of a collection. If so, then belonging to the collection has no part in making the individual what it is, and hence the collection cannot be a Boethian universal. If not, then one collection is as good as another, it seems, and there is no reason to prefer complete to incomplete collections, or indeed to arbitrary collections.

22. Abelard takes the claim from Boethius, *De div.* 12.24–25 (879B). Abelard's third objection, like the first, turns on the fact that universals and integral wholes have incompatible features.
23. See Abelard's gloss on Boethius's remark in *Dial.* 575.5–14; compare Boethius, *De div.* 14.1–3 (879C). Similar objections are reported in Pseudo-Joscelin, *De generibus ac speciebus* 112, and *Ars Meliduna* 219ra43–47.
24. Abelard describes indifference theories generally in *LI Isag.* 13.18–14.6 (Spade 1994, 41–44) and *LNPS* 518.9–24; see also Pseudo-Joscelin, *De generibus ac speciebus* 50; and Walter of Mortagne, *Tractatus "quoniam de generali"* 26. The terminology of "indifference" derives from Boethius's account of sameness among the Persons of the Trinity: *De Trin.* 1 167.41–168.55 and 3 173.168–170.
25. For William of Champeaux see his *Sententiae* q.1 25.1–9 and Abelard's summary in *LI Isag.* 16.9–10 (Spade 1994, 60). For Walter of Mortagne see his *Tractatus "quoniam de generali"* 29–31; the same position is described by Abelard in *LNPS* 518.24–27, Pseudo-Joscelin in *De generibus ac speciebus* 50, and retrospectively by John of Salisbury in *Metalogicon* 2.17.14–15 and *Policraticus* 7.12.2.
26. See also the concise summary of the objection in *LI Isag.* 37.3–17. Walter of Mortagne recounts Abelard's objection in *Tractatus "quoniam de generali"* 42.
27. Walter of Mortagne, *Tractatus "quoniam de generali"* 43.
28. *LNPS* 519.11–26; Walter of Mortagne, *Tractatus "quoniam de generali"* 48.
29. Abelard's criticism of Walter's account depends precisely on the latter's insistence that Socrates's status as an individual is some sort of thing. In his own account of universals, Abelard adopts some of the same terminology but rejects that claim: see *LI Isag.* 19.29–33 (Spade 1994, 90), which refers to his argument here.
30. The following remark is typical: "There is no thing that is not distinct" (*LI Cat.* 157.8). Abelard will qualify this conclusion in light of his theory of identity and the existence of integral wholes and collections, as described in §II.3 and §III below.
31. Abelard holds that *x* is distinct from all else when none of *x* belongs to anything not all of which belongs to *x*, which is (roughly) how he explains numerical diversity: see §III.1 below.
32. Abelard takes the point from Plato by way of Porphyry: see *Isag.* 3 12.9–13.
33. See Abelard's second objection to material essence realism, discussed in §I.1 above; *LI Isag.* 64.7–65.5; and *LNPS* 520.6–14.
34. We first have to determine the ontological standing of concrete individuals relative to their forms, matter, and constituent parts to state this



claim with more exactness, a project that will occupy the rest of §II and the analysis of identity in §III. At a first approximation, Abelard holds that individuals are concrete entities such as Socrates and Fido, as well as some of their forms; other forms, their matter, and their physical parts are only “individual” in a derivative sense.

35. See *Hex.* 10.9–11: “Since angels are incorporeal they are not included among mundane creatures the way humans are.” In *In Isag. maior* 1.10 160.23–161.7, Boethius distinguishes two classes of incorporeals in explaining Porphyry’s questions about universals: those that are necessarily conjoined with bodies, such as points and line, and those that need not be, such as God and the (human) soul. Abelard thinks that elements of the first class are actually corporeal; see the discussion in §IV.1 below. The human soul is exceptional among mundane objects, as we shall see.
36. Abelard describes primary and secondary creation while examining substantial generation and corruption in *LI Cat.* 297.41–298.20 (there called “the earlier and later creations”) and *Dial.* 419.1–420.6, and again while glossing Genesis 1:1–2 in *Hex.* 9.7–17.19.
37. This description draws on *Dial.* 419.5–12 and *Hex.* 9.7–14.3. The chaotic mass has the features of the biblical creation of “heaven” (the qualities associated with air and fire) and “earth” (the qualities associated with water and earth) on the first day (Genesis 1:1); the Holy Spirit then organized this undifferentiated mass (Genesis 1:2: *Spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas*). Abelard sidesteps the question whether at first there were only the distinctive qualities paired to make the four elements, or whether there were indivisible form-matter compounds where the quality-pairs are form to some underlying prime matter; even *Dial.* 418.33–34 doesn’t resolve the issue.
38. See the discussion of Abelard’s atomism in §IV.1 below.
39. Secondary creation is modeled on God’s creation of man from clay in Genesis 2:7: *Dial.* 419.13–15 and 419.25–27; *Hex.* 10.22–11.8 and 102.12–20. In his description of secondary creation and elsewhere – e.g. *LI Cat.* 149.38–150.1 or *TI* 38–39 – Abelard presupposes rather than argues for the plurality of substantial forms. He tells us, for instance, that God “initially fashioned man’s body from clay and thereafter (*deinde*) infused his soul” (*Hex.* 102.14–15), a process that involves the form of corporeity as well as the human soul.
40. In the passages from *TI* we are also told that the process of conceiving forms free from matter is “abstraction” and of the underlying matter without forms “substraction.”
41. Abelard draws the consequences for material souls explicitly in *LI Cat.* 298.25–26: “When a brute animal dies, its soul is corrupted along with it, while it is hauled into non-being.”

42. Abelard makes the same point in explaining Aristotle's remark at *Cat.* 7 7b38–39 that the senses operate in and through bodily instruments, in contradistinction to the understanding: *LI De in* 3.01.23 (G 313.20–30), *Dial.* 556.23–36. Nevertheless the soul, like the senses, can be a subject for accidents (namely individual mental acts), even though it is incorporeal: *LI Isag.* 94.37–39.
43. Abelard never tells us how to divide Substance properly.
44. See *LI Isag.* 79.17–18 (appearing practically verbatim at *LNPS* 564.24–25): "Rationality is not strictly called 'form,' since it doesn't arise in the subject from the arrangement of its parts"; he offers independent arguments for this conclusion in *LI Cat.* 212.37–213.5. (Abelard follows common practice in referring to the human soul by its constitutive feature, viz. rationality.) While Abelard does not explain how a non-form (the soul) and the body can be united to make something naturally one, but this is presumably due to divine agency: God creates each human soul as needed and infuses it into the body, creating a composite that is "naturally one" by supernatural action.
45. Abelard's account differs radically from Boethius's gloss of this passage in the latter's *In Isag. maior* 4.11 268.10–12.
46. Abelard also discusses "formal wholes," such as the division of the soul into its constituent powers (*Dial.* 555.20–559.37), and "wholes according to substance and form," such as the combination of a substantial form with its differentia (*Dial.* 559.38–561.23), but only integral wholes are discussed here. The broader division also derives from Boethius, *De div.* 38.17–27 (887D–888A). Recognizing universal wholes doesn't commit Abelard to thinking that there are any in the world, of course. He also takes up accidental wholes, which we'll ignore here; see the discussion of quantitative wholes in §IV.1 below.
47. This might not seem to be so in homogenous continuous quantities, where every part is of the same kind as its whole, e.g. every line-segment is itself a line. Abelard argues that in such cases the parts are clearly less in quantity than the whole, and so they are not really the same as it: *Dial.* 547.34–548.10 and 576.12–22. Note that Abelard uses "part" only for proper parts (*Dial.* 554.15–17).
48. For Aristotle see *Cat.* 6 4b35–36, which Abelard follows at *LI Cat* 169.12–13 and *Dial.* 71.25–26. Abelard's preferred definition is given in *LI Cat.* 169.23–28 and *Dial.* 73.19–27.
49. For geometrical solids see *LI Cat.* 179.26–184.12, *Dial.* 57.14–60.38, and the discussion in §IV.1 below.
50. See *Dial.* 431.23–432.5, *Dial.* 548.11–21 (only collections and composites), and *LI Cat.* 170.34–171.17 for the following discussion.

51. In *Secundum mag. Petrum* 31 Abelard rejects the proposal in 13 that the members of a collection together with the collection make a new collection (the unrestricted “upward” axiom).
52. Abelard allows there to be overlapping subcollections within a given collection, so that e.g. a triple contains three distinct pairs: *Secundum mag. Petrum* 32–33. In general, any collection of units (i.e. an  $n$ -tuple) is a species of number, as Abelard argues in *LI Cat.* 169.33–170.33 and *Dial.* 64.11–65.19.
53. The converse thesis, namely that all composite integral wholes are hylomorphic compounds, also holds if we take “form” broadly.
54. Destructivism is extensively discussed in the contemporary *De generibus ac speciebus* 1–31 (with the destructivist criterion announced in 7).
55. Strictly speaking only collections are defined through their parts; aggregations and composites have additional requirements, but *a fortiori* must also consist in their parts, and so Abelard’s argument is perfectly general.
56. Abelard’s line of reasoning here is an application of his general thesis that quantitative change is literally impossible: an integral whole cannot have more or fewer parts, since then it would be a different integral whole. Apparent cases of quantitative change are really cases of replacement, as described. See *LI Cat.* 299.11–300.26 and *Dial.* 421.32–424.5 for Abelard’s defense of the general thesis (sometimes known as the “paradox of increase”).
57. See *TI* 75–76: “There is no nature that subsists indifferently; any given thing, wherever it exists, is personally distinct and found to be numerically one . . . What else is human nature in this man, i.e. in Socrates, but Socrates himself? Surely it is nothing other than exactly the same in essence.” (The proviso “exactly the same in essence” is a technical phrase explained in §III.1 below.) Abelard expresses the same sentiment in many other passages, for instance *LI Isag.* 24.17–20; Spade 1994, 122.
58. Abelard cites Boethius as claiming that nature is *similitudo rerum nascentium* here and in *LI Cat.* 278.16–20 and *LI De in.* 3.01.35 (G 315.21–22); Boethius says *ipsa nimirum similitudo nascentium* (*In Cat.* 166A), though *rerum* for *nimirum* would be an easy mistake to make. Note that Abelard passes over in silence Boethius’s four “official” definitions of “nature” given in *Contra Eutychen* 1, which are not as susceptible to his reductive interpretation.
59. There is a remarkably similar passage in William of Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d.2 q.6 (see Spade 1994, 181–182, §§ 162–163) that reaches what is recognizably the same solution.

60. See *Hex.* 38.3–39.3, summarized neatly in 45.5–11: “In the works of those six days, God’s will took the place of natural power while Nature itself was created – that is, a certain power was bestowed upon those things which then came to be, whereby they were afterwards able to reproduce themselves or bring about whatever effects were to proceed from or be engendered by them.” (See also *Hex.* 55.8–13.) Abelard refers to this process in describing the origins of substantial change: *LI Cat.* 298.11–12 and *Dial.* 419.17–23. God’s ability to do otherwise than he does is relative only to God’s omnipotence; as Abelard notoriously argues in *TC* 4, God’s intrinsic goodness constrains him to do only what is best. In later medieval terminology, such claims are relative to God’s absolute rather than his ordained power.
61. Modern logicians try to reduce *de re* to *de dicto* modality, while Abelard embraced the opposite reduction of *de dicto* (or, as Abelard called it, *de sensu*) to *de re* modality because of problems about quantifying into and over *de dicto* modal propositions and the consequent unwelcome ontological commitments. The modal logic of his time, as of our time, is not equipped to deal with these difficulties: standard logical operations on simple categorical sentences do not carry over to *de dicto* sentences, whereas they do carry over to *de re* sentences.
62. Boethius holds that possibilities are rooted in the individual’s matter and nature: *In De in. maior* 3.9 238.8–239.14; cf. *In De in. maior* 3.9 233.26–28 and 5.13 416.21–22. Boethius also describes the Peripatetic view of possibility as depending on “the nature of the thing” (*In De in. maior* 3.9 197.18–23). There are echoes of the view, applied to necessity, in *In Cic. Top.* 1154A–B and *Cons.* 5.6.29.
63. See also Abelard’s explanation of modal opposition in *Dial.* 200.22–32. Abelard mentions his analysis of possibility frequently, e.g. in 35 and 53 of the excursus to *LI* 3.12; *Dial.* 98.16–18; *TC* 5.58; *TSch* 3.51. Note that Abelard is proposing an *analysis* of modality, not a reductive elimination of it; “compatibility” is itself a modal notion.
64. Analogous to the Tarski biconditional for simple categorical sentences “‘S is  $\varphi$ ’ is true  $\Leftrightarrow$  S is  $\varphi$ ” Abelard endorses “‘S is  $\varphi$ ’ is possible  $\Leftrightarrow$  the nature of S is compatible with  $\varphi$ ” (*Dial.* 205.24–35).
65. See §11.1 above. Abelard’s claim is less plausible if we take “nature” loosely, including (say) typical behavior, for then it seems that there are informative claims to be made at the level of individuals: “Socrates always gets sleepy in the middle of the afternoon; that’s just his nature.” Abelard will try to assimilate such cases to ascription of powers rather than possibilities, but it’s not clear that this is anything more than regimentation on his part. His restriction to the level of the species does explain how we can assess modal statements about nonexistents, since

- their nature is the same as that found in existing members of the same kind: see *LI De in.* 3.13.74 (MP 197 84.20–23).
66. Abelard glosses necessity as the inevitable in *LI Isag.* 4.22–24, 3.9.143 (G 437.37–38) and 3.9.188 (G 446.32–33), and 35 of the excursus in *LI* 3.12; *LNPS* 510.25–27; *Dial.* 194.7–9 and 272.11–12; *TSch* 3.101 and 3.107.
  67. Abelard emphasizes that necessity and determinateness differ: *LI De In.* 3.09.143 (G 438.11–17). He even proposes dividing up the species of the possible into the determinate possible and the indeterminate possible: *LI De in.* 3.13.55 (MP 179 78.20–23). Abelard tries at length to sort out the conceptual connections among necessity, determinateness, and avoidability in addressing the problem of future contingents raised by Aristotle in *De in.* 9, but his concerns have more to do with human freedom than with explicating modality.
  68. See 67–106 of the excursus to *LI* 3.12, as well as *Dial.* 206.13–210.18, for Abelard's discussion of relative modals. The notion is an extrapolation from Aristotle's claim in *De in.* 9 19a23–24 that anything that is must necessarily be while it is: *LI De in.* 3.09.166–169 (G 442.4–30).
  69. Abelard emphasizes "becoming" here because he has in mind cases in which *S* cannot actually be  $\varphi$  but could become  $\varphi$ , e.g. "Socrates can die" (Socrates cannot literally be dead since "Socrates" is necessarily the name of a living creature): *Dial.* 197.2–12. This criterion faces complications arising from Aristotle's distinction between rational and irrational powers (*De in.* 13 22b36–23a4), where *S* has an irrational power if *S* can  $\varphi$  or not- $\varphi$ , but we can put those aside for now.
  70. There seems an obvious flaw: if Socrates has never had medical training but nothing precludes his performing open-heart surgery on a patient, then Abelard's account entails that Socrates can perform open-heart surgery. But this is to confuse the sense in which Socrates can *try* to do something with its more idiomatic "success" use – to confuse the capacity with the capability, we might say. Abelard is here concerned with the former, not the latter; see *LI Cat.* 229.15–231.32 and *Dial.* 96.18–99.24.
  71. Abelard has to revise his account of powers, which refer to possibilities, to make this line of thought coherent. Notoriously, he holds that God can be necessitated by His nature (which is why God cannot do other than He does), which suggests that there may yet be a place in the theory of modality for natures, at least divine natures.
  72. See Boethius, *In Isag. maior* 2.6 191.21–192.19 and *De Trin.* 1 167.48–168.56 (the *locus classicus*). Numerical sameness is the medieval version of the modern conception of identity as a relation a thing has to itself.

73. There is no systematic exposition of a theory of identity in *IP*, *LI*, or *Dial*. In *LNPS* 558.11–560.15 (found almost verbatim in the anonymous student compilation *Glossae “secundum vocales,”* 178–179), Abelard describes the modes of sameness and difference in essence, number, definition, likeness, change, and function. In *TSB* 2.4.82–102 he treats the same modes but in greater depth; much of his exposition is repeated in *TC* 3.138–164 with the additional mode of sameness and difference in property. The account in *TSch* 2.95–100 is deliberately simplified, treating only essence, number, “property or definition” (an amalgam of each), and likeness.
74. Technically these modes involve not difference but “diversity,” since difference requires a differentia, but I’ll ignore that refinement in what follows.
75. For essential and numerical sameness and difference, see *TC* 3.139 (same) and 3.148–153 (different), *TSB* 2.4.83 (same) and 2.4.90–95 (different), *TSch* 2.95, *LNPS* 558.15–17. The formulation here is taken from *TC* 3.139, which is derived nearly verbatim from *TSB* 2.4.83. Now in *TC* 3.139 Abelard sorts out the details of numerical sameness and difference, and hence included the proviso that they must be numerically the same concrete thing. His account presupposes and does not try to explain what being “numerically the same concrete thing” consists in. More exactly, it presupposes an account of concrete things (individuals) and their identity-conditions, presumably of the type sketched in §11.1 above.
76. See *TC* 3.148 and 3.151; *TSB* 2.4.90; *TSch* 2.97; *LNPS* 558.24–25; *Secundum mag. Petrum* 33.
77. This line of thought is absent from *TSB* 3.2.7 because of his unclarity over numerical identity in that work (see n. 75 above). Abelard takes his reasoning to explain Boethius’s axiom that the part is not the same as the whole, *De div.* 14.14 (879D). As noted in §11.3 above, Abelard uses “part” only for proper parts (*Dial.* 554.15–17).
78. Abelard is committed to this result for theological reasons, since in the case of the Trinity the answer differs depending on whether we are counting gods (one) or persons (three): see e.g. the end of *TC* 4.9. His application of the theory of identity to the world at large just reiterates this ontological indeterminacy.
79. These conclusions fit well with an anonymous report of Abelard’s views on the ontological standing of forms, given immediately after the text of the *Tractatus de intellectibus* in the single exemplar of that work: MS Avranches Bibliothèque Municipale 232 F. 68<sup>v</sup>–71<sup>v</sup>. The report, partially transcribed in Cousin and Jourdain 1859, vol. II.754–755, concludes that Abelard and his followers “assert that no form is a real thing (*essentiam*)

for which any of the following hold: (i) the subject suffices for its being; (ii) the arrangement of parts with respect to one another or along with another; (iii) that it be present due to something extrinsic; (iv) for whose departure it is necessary that a substance be added" (755). That is, only positive non-relational real accidents might be "things" in a loose sense, i.e. not numerically the same as their subjects.

80. This is not to be confused with Abelard's notion of identity "in property" discussed in §III.3 below.
81. For sameness and difference in definition, see *TC* 3.142–144 (same) and 3.154–157 (different), *TSB* 2.4.84–85 (same) and 2.4.96–98 (different), *TSch* 2.95–99, *LNPS* 559.5–29.
82. Why then does Abelard use the term "definition" at all? The answer may be that Aristotelian definition was the only known (quasi-formal) way to specify the feature or features that are peculiarly or especially appropriate to something in virtue of what it is. This seems to be the intent of Abelard's stipulation in *TC* 3.143, *TSB* 2.4.85, and *LNPS* 559.11–12 that by "definition" here he intends something that "fully expresses the meaning" of a term and what is suitable to it, neither exceeding nor exceeded by it.
83. Abelard suggests in *TC* 4.1 that the same concrete individual may be characterized in indefinitely many ways; see also *LI Isag.* 25.6–8; Spade 1994, 127.
84. Abelard is careful to distinguish " $x$  is  $\varphi$ " from " $x$  is what is  $\varphi$ ": the former describes how a subject is characterized, whereas the latter is an identity-statement, identifying a subject with something characterized in a certain way. See Abelard, *LNPS* 522.10–32 and 523.11–36 (which should be compared to *LNPS* 539.24–44), although Geyer's text is unreliable in several places.
85. Abelard describes the wax-example in detail in *TC* 3.140–141, and returns to it in *TC* 4.85–92 with brief mentions in *TC* 4.102 and 4.106. (He describes the same example in *TSB* 3.2.59, though of course not presenting it as an instance of difference in property, a conception absent from the latter work.) To follow Abelard's analysis it should be recognized that while the terms *materiatum* and *formatum* have a dual use – they refer to either (a) that which comes to be out of the matter or form, respectively, in which case each term picks out the whole composite; or (b) that which is enmattered, namely the form, or that which is informed, namely the matter – Abelard consistently uses only (a).
86. Abelard offers a second example in an aside in *TC* 3.141: Socrates is some thing, namely a body, that is characterized by *everlastingness*, since the material elements that make up his body never cease to exist, although it is not true that Socrates himself is everlasting. (See also *TC* 4.40.)

87. Abelard faces the challenge of explaining how what is really the same thing, the composite, can fail to be characterized by the properties *priority* and *posteriority* without granting independent ontological standing to each of the property-bearers, and in particular to the matter. Otherwise he faces the objection that such contradictory properties really do characterize one and the same thing, namely the concrete individual.
88. See especially *TC* 4.85–92 for Abelard's detailed comparison of the properties of each Person to sameness and difference in property.
89. For further discussion, see chapter 7 below.
90. The distinction is present, though inchoate, in *LI Isag.* 37.34–39.3 (where it appears as a distinction between taking *voces ut res* and *voces ut voces*), alluded to again in *LI Cat.* 292.38–40. He regiments his terminology in *LNPS*, most famously in contrasting the possibility that universals are *voces* with his own view that they are *sermones*: *LNPS* 522.10–13.
91. In *LI De in.* 3.02.6–8 (G 335.1–25) Abelard cites with approval Boethius's definition of the *vox* as what we would call an utterance-token produced in a certain way (*In De in. maior* 4.18–20).
92. In *LNPS* 522.22–25 Abelard likens a word to a statue (composite) made out of stone (matter), exactly analogous to the waxen image and the wax in *TC* 3.141; here the unmixed properties are *being made by the sculptor*, which only applies to the statue (see §iv.3 below) and is analogous to semantic properties, and *being made by God*, which only applies to the stone and is analogous to physical properties.
93. See *LNPS* 523.37–524.2, where Abelard explains that the proposition "The concrete thing that is the utterance is predicable of many" is false because once an utterance-token "has been spoken" it "cannot be taken hold of again": *dictum est enim et non potest amplius sumi*, meant to echo Aristotle, *Cat.* 6 5a33–35, which underlines the transience of the utterance: *Sed dictum est et non potest amplius hoc sumi* (*ed. comp.* 56.13–14; see *Dial.* 54.11).
94. Boethius, *In Cat.* 161A: *Ut igitur concludenda sit intentio, dicendum est in hoc libro de primis uocibus, prima rerum genera significantibus in eo quod significantes sunt, dispositum esse tractatum*. This view was designed to resolve a dispute in antiquity over the subject-matter of the *Categories*, namely whether it was mainly about words (and hence a work of logic) or about things (and hence a work of metaphysics). Abelard endorses Boethius's dictum in *LI* 2.00 111.18–112.1 and 113.26–33.
95. Abelard presents the distinction between signification and reference *ex professo* in *LI Cat.* 112.31–113.2 and *LI De in.* 3.00.6–11 (G 307.26–309.25). The *Categories* and the *De interpretatione* are therefore works



- of logic, since they are about words, but the former studies them with regard to reference whereas the latter does so with regard to signification: *LI Cat.* 113.29–33 and *LI De in.* 3.00.11 (G 309.14–25).
96. Abelard is explicit and unambiguous: *LI Isag.* 54.32–55.3 and *LI Cat.* 116.35–117.7. One proposal for a lesser list is the fourfold division Aristotle presents in *Cat.* 2 (*LI Cat.* 126.27–36): items that are respectively either present in a subject or not, and said of a subject or not. (Abelard gives this division a semantic interpretation in *LI Cat.* 131.10–37.) From some of his remarks, it seems that another candidate for Abelard would be a division of items depending on their degree of ontological standing or independence.
  97. Abelard explains in *LI Cat.* 157.23–28 that primary and secondary substances, as words, differ “in their manner of reference” since the former refer to individuals “as personally distinct and different from all others” whereas the latter “appellate them as agreeing.”
  98. Abelard finds fault with Aristotle’s preferred criterion for substance, namely that while being one and the same it is susceptible to contraries (*Cat.* 5 4a10–12), since this equally applies to (say) whiteness, which, while remaining whiteness, can be either dull or lustrous; Abelard proposes to correct Aristotle by stipulating that “susceptible” must be taken with regard to sustaining contraries as their foundation, not merely being informed by them: *LI Cat.* 160.25–161.17 and *Dial.* 52.27–53.10.
  99. For Abelard’s account of continuous quantity and of (some) discrete quantities, see §11.3 above.
  100. Abelard makes the point most clearly in *Dial.* 57.14–16; see also *LI Cat.* 179.29–33. Strictly speaking, a body is made up of atoms, which are indivisible point-amounts of bodies; Abelard sometimes loosely speaks of bodies as composed of points.
  101. Abelard gives a physical reading to this argument in *LI Cat.* 182.16–28 and *Dial.* 60.25–35 when he puzzles over how a blade could cut through a line: it can’t slice through a point, since points are indivisible; nor can it pass through the distance between two points, since there is none. Abelard finally concludes that the blade must spread apart two adjoining points and thereby pass between them.
  102. Abelard seems not to know Aristotle’s claim that only actual infinities, not potential infinities such as those involved in (infinite) divisibility, are unacceptable.
  103. Mathematically, the difference is between a set of elements, such as the points belonging to a line, and a measure-function defined over those elements producing a nonzero result.

104. See *Dial.* 59.4–6: “Although I have heard many solutions given by mathematicians to this objection, I judge that I shouldn’t put any forward, since I fully recognize my ignorance of that art.”
105. Abelard argues elsewhere that we can explain the intensity of qualities by real superposition, so that something becomes whiter, for instance, by having more particles of whiteness on top of each other: *Dial.* 428.35–429.20.
106. Abelard neutrally calls (a)–(d) “types” (*maneriae*) of Quality in most of his discussion.
107. Boethius, *De div.* 28.26–27 (884C); Abelard, *Dial.* 103.11–12.
108. In the second passage, Abelard ascribes the view to “my former teacher V.” (William of Champeaux? Ulger of Angiers?). Aristotle seems to have put the cat among the pigeons with his remark that Quality can include many relative terms: *Cat.* 8 11a21–22.
109. In Boethius’s translation, the first or “Platonic” definition is: “Things are said to be relatives when they are called what they are of another, or in any other way relative” (*ed. comp.* 58.23–25). The second definition is: “Relatives are those things for which their very being is to stand as relative in some fashion” (*ed. comp.* 62.17–18).
110. Note how the Platonic definition describes how things are called what they are, whereas the Aristotelian definition talks about their very being.
111. See *LI Cat.* 216.35–217.8 and *Dial.* 83.24–32 and 86.22–27, the sources for the ensuing discussion. I have regimented Abelard’s somewhat fluid terminology. Note that in using *fundamenta* and *subiecta* interchangeably Abelard is at variance with later medieval terminology, which sharply differentiates them.
112. For Boethius, see *In Isag. maior* 2.3 174.14–175.4, and also *De top. diff.* 2.7.22–24 35.2–17, *In Cic. Top.* 1145D–1147D.
113. See *LI Cat.* 189.28–30: “Surely for a place to surround a point is nothing but to circumscribe it, that is, to delimit it in such a way that it is its place, and for this purpose it doesn’t have to be greater”; cf. also *Dial.* 60.21–23.
114. Abelard takes this last argument from Aristotle, *Cat.* 6 5a9–13 (*ed. comp.* 55.16–21); see *LI Cat.* 189.13–19 and *Dial.* 59.29–60.4.
115. Abelard begins his discussion by running through Boethius’s nine senses in which one thing is said to be “in” another: *Dial.* 78.25–79.2 (referring to Boethius, *In Cat.* 172B–C).
116. The firmament was the outermost sphere of the heavens, created on the Second Day, in which the fixed stars are located (Genesis 1:17); Abelard examines its physical composition in *Hex.* 37.6–40.18.

117. To account for putatively “empty” places Abelard should therefore maintain that the world is actually a plenum, where something such as air is actually present, and thus reject the existence of a vacuum – which is precisely what he does in the prologue to the *Sic et non* (96.169–171) while discussing the interpretation of texts.
118. This account is described, and labeled the “common view,” in *LI Cat.* 184.38–185.6. The real difficulty here is the “coordination problem” but Abelard does address the question why we construct temporal wholes out of the successive instants in a given thing rather than taking (coordinated) instants across distinct things; see also *LI Cat.* 186.23–31.
119. Abelard draws the connection clearly in *LI Cat.* 186.9–12: “Thus when we say that an action takes a year we don’t have to postulate a year in it, or many years or many days that exist simultaneously, but only a single year that adjoins the world simultaneously as a whole, namely the firmament along with all the substances it includes.” See also *Dial.* 554.8–13. This is as close as Abelard comes to Aristotle’s conception of time as the measure of motion.
120. Abelard is following Aristotle, *Cat.* 6 5a7–8; *IP Cat.* 67.3–7, *LI Cat.* 186.26–34, *Dial.* 62.13–22.
121. Abelard notices the indexical character of these terms but doesn’t say much about it. He says nothing about the B-series “earlier” and “later.”
122. Abelard discusses the oddities of temporal wholes in *LI Cat.* 186.39–188.22 as well as *Dial.* 62.32–64.6 and 553.8–554.36; I draw on all of these in what follows.
123. His knowledge derives from Boethius: see n. 112. He discusses the four causes in *Dial.* 414.21–417.37.
124. In the last passage Abelard appeals to Augustine, citing his doctrine that sin is a privation in support of his claim that causes need not be things.
125. Abelard discusses future contingents in *LI* 3.09 and *Dial.* 210.21–222.25; he does not often speak of an *eventus* outside this context; he uses the term in glossing *Cat.* 12, discussing the truth of sentences, and occasionally elsewhere.
126. In this expression the *rei/rerum* is a subjective genitive, so that Abelard is speaking of the thing’s (or the things’) coming-about, the “coming-about” that belongs to the thing or things. What is more, Abelard uses the expression *eventus rerum* interchangeably with *res eveniunt*, which clearly ascribes an activity or property to the *res* (see for example *Dial.* 218.16–219.24).
127. In *LI De in.* 3.09.44–47 (G 422.41–423.27), Abelard asks how philosophers who hold that all past and present events, but no future events, are determinate should interpret the *res* of the *eventus rerum*: are they

concrete things, or are they *dicta*? He puts forward puzzles for each alternative, but doesn't address the question on his own terms. However, it is noteworthy that he does not consider the suggestion that the *res* are anything like states of affairs.

128. Abelard's arguments are presented in *LI De in.* 3.04.17–19 (G 365.39–366.12) and *Dial.* 154.20–155.24.
129. Abelard also calls it the *existentia rei/rerum* in *Dial.* 154.10, 155.35, 156.29, 156.34, 157.14–15; *TI* 81–82; and *TC* 4.156. He seems to use this expression interchangeably with *essentia rerum* in *Dial.* 155.26 and 155.34. Abelard uses the term *dictum* only in his *LI* (apart from a single occurrence in *Coll.* 202), but for consistency and convenience I'll use it throughout.
130. See *LI De in.* 3.04.16; *nullae omnino essentiae* (G 365.37) and *nil est omnino* (G 365.33 and 365.1).
131. At one point Abelard even refuses to say anything positive about *dicta*, to avoid any grounds for granting them ontological standing: *LI De in.* 3.04.41 (G 369.37–39). This dodge won't work, but it shows how committed he is to not granting them any metaphysical status.
132. The Latin text runs as follows: "Quippe 'Socrates' ipsum significat in eo quod Socrates est. Nec tamen dicit ipsum esse Socratem, sicut 'Socrates est Socrates' dicit. Unde in dicto propositionis differentiam habet ipsa a nomine, quod videlicet propositio dicit 'Socrates est Socrates,' quod non est aliqua essentia, 'Socrates' vero id non dicit, licet Socratem nominet secundum hoc quod est Socrates."
133. Again, the Latin text runs as follows: "Patet insuper ea quae propositiones dicunt nullas res esse, cum videlicet nulli rei praedicatio earum [reading *earum* for de Rijk's *eorum*] aptari possit; de quibus enim dici potest quod ipsa sint 'Socrates est lapis' vel 'Socrates non est lapis'? Iam enim profecto nomina oporteret esse, si res designarent ipsas ac ponerent propositiones, quae quidem ab omnibus in hoc dictionibus differunt quod aliquid esse vel non esse aliud proponunt. Esse autem rem aliquam vel non esse nulla est omnino rerum essentia. Non itaque propositiones res aliquas designant simpliciter, quemadmodum nomina, immo qualiter sese ad invicem habent, utrum scilicet sibi conveniant annon, proponunt; ac tunc quidem verae sunt, cum ita est in re sicut enuntiant, tunc autem falsae, cum non est in re ita. Et est profecto ita in re, sicut dicit vera propositio, sed non est res aliqua quod dicit. Unde quasi quidam rerum modus habendi se per propositiones exprimitur, non res aliquae designantur." Abelard uses the same line of argument in *LI De in.* 3.04.22–23 (G 366.30–35).
134. Abelard tartly remarks that we should no more confuse truth or "being in reality" (*esse in re*) with metaphysics or "being a real thing" (*esse*

*rem*) than we should confuse being in a house with being a house: *LI Top.* 226.7–8.

135. Abelard holds that true consequential sentences are true from eternity, by which he means that their truth depends solely on the natures of things involved, which God has timelessly established to be as they are: *Dial.* 264.38–265.1, 282.25–29, 283.12–15.
136. Although Abelard's metaphysics takes irrealism as its inspiration, making it congenial to our contemporary philosophical temperament, it has received comparatively little attention from scholars. Few of his important texts are available in translation, and Abelard's philosophy of logic and language has generally taken pride of place in philosophical studies. Yet there are works on several aspects of Abelard's metaphysics that can be consulted for further reading, in addition, of course, to the texts of Abelard himself.

Marenbon 1997a is a general survey of Abelard's philosophy, including discussions of many metaphysical topics. Detailed discussions of Abelard's arguments against realist theories of universals can be found in Boler 1963, Tweedale 1976, King 1982, and Bertoni 1987, with a general overview in de Libera 1987; collective realism comes in for extended treatment in Freddoso 1978 and Henry 1984. The metaphysical side of Abelard's solution to the problem of universals, in particular whether the *status* is some kind of thing or a special non-thing, is discussed at length in Tweedale 1976, Maloney 1982, Blackwell 1988, and Marenbon 1997a; the impact of Abelard's semantical views on his metaphysics is explored in de Rijk 1980 and 1985.

Abelard's theory of individuality is treated in Wade 1963 and extensively in Gracia 1984. Marenbon 1997a dissects Abelard's views on matter and form; Henry 1985 takes up Abelard's account of matter and integral wholes, building on his previous analyses in Henry 1972 and Henry 1984. Natures are discussed in Marenbon 1997a, and Abelard's account of real modality in Marenbon 1991.

Brower 1998 takes up Abelard's theory of relations, one of the few studies of Abelard's account of the Aristotelian categories. King 1982 and Perler 1994 take Abelard to propose an ontology of facts. The fundamental study of Abelard's account of *dicta* was Nuchelmans 1973, placed in a wider context by de Libera 1981, who allies it with philosophical issues about states of affairs, facts, and events; the question has since been taken up in de Rijk 1982, Jacobi 1983, Pinzani 1995, and Guilfooy 1999.

## 5 Logic

A great deal of Peter Abelard's writing is concerned with what he regarded as logic, but which we would now classify as ontology or philosophical semantics.<sup>1</sup> Following Cicero and Boethius, Abelard holds that properly speaking the study of logic has to do with the discovery and evaluation of arguments (*LI Isag.* 3.10). A necessary preliminary for this is an examination of the issues dealt with by Porphyry in the *Isagoge* and by Aristotle in the *Categories*, and *De interpretatione* (*LI Cat.* 113.26–114.30). In the present chapter, however, I will ignore most of this material and concentrate on the central issue of logical theory both for Abelard and for us, that is, on the nature of the relation of consequence, or following.<sup>2</sup> Even with this limitation there is a great deal of ground to cover. Abelard sets out his theory of entailment and argument in two very extended and dense discussions both of which have suffered considerable textual corruption. The treatment of topics and hypothetical syllogisms in the *Dialectica*, is apparently the earlier. The other is the surviving fragment of Abelard's commentary on Boethius's *De topicis differentiis*, *Glossae super De topicis differentiis*, which seems to belong with his other commentaries on the works of the *logica vetus* published as the *Logica "ingredientibus."* The two expositions disagree on some crucial questions, but here I will restrict myself almost entirely to the discussion in the *Dialectica*.

Abelard was the greatest logician between Aristotle and the Stoics in antiquity and William of Ockham and John Buridan in the fourteenth century. In many ways his achievement is much more remarkable than those of Ockham and Buridan. They had all of Aristotle's logic and built upon two centuries of intensive work by their medieval predecessors. Abelard had only the *Isagoge*, *Categories*, and *De*

*interpretatione*, accompanied by Boethius's commentaries on them and his rudimentary paraphrase of *Prior Analytics* 1, 1–7. In addition, Abelard had Boethius's treatise on the hypothetical syllogism, *De syllogismis hypotheticis*, his study of division, *De divisione*, and his two works on topical inference: *In Topica Ciceronis*, a commentary on Cicero's *Topica*, and *De topicis differentiis*, an introduction to the theory of topical arguments. He also had a brief work by Marius Victorinus on definition, *De definitionibus*, and some material relevant to his logical concerns in Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*. Abelard is often critical of the logical theories of his contemporaries but unfortunately, aside from what he himself tells us, relatively little of their work and that of his immediate predecessors has been published.<sup>3</sup>

Abelard's logical theory appears to have developed as an attempt, a quite brilliant one, to unify into a single theory various disconnected remarks made by Boethius in his discussions of the topics and hypothetical syllogism. To understand Abelard's work we must thus first say something about the material which he inherited from Boethius in *De topicis differentiis* and *De syllogismis hypotheticis*.

## I. THE BOETHIAN INHERITANCE

### I.1 *Boethius's theory of topical arguments*

Boethius is the sole Latin representative of the neo-Platonic commentary tradition which flourished in Alexandria and Athens from the third to the sixth centuries CE. These commentators wrote at a time when the original impetus for logical investigation had been lost and many of the issues were no longer well understood, in particular the problem of the relationship between Stoic and Peripatetic accounts of argument. The material which Boethius bequeathed to the philosophers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where it is not entirely elementary, is frequently confused and sometimes inconsistent. Its transformation by Abelard into a unified theory of entailment and argument is extraordinarily impressive.

The promise made by Boethius as a reward for the study of the *loci*, or topics, is irresistible. It will provide access to a rich source of arguments to settle any given question. Boethius proposes in *De topicis differentiis* to give an account of the role of the *loci* in the

discovery of arguments, to explain what a *locus* is, how *loci* differ from one another, and to show which *loci* "are appropriate for which syllogisms" (*De top. diff.* 1.1173C). The last of these is especially important for Abelard since he construes it as a claim about the nature of the syllogism which he rejects.

In pursuing his project Boethius first introduces the technical terminology which will provide medieval philosophers with a vocabulary for theorizing about argumentation. He insists that in proving a conclusion a distinction must be made between what, following Cicero, he calls an *argumentum*, the meaning, or sense, of the words used in proving something (*De top. diff.* 1.1174C), and an argument (*argumentatio*), the verbal or written expression of such a proof. The *locus* for an argument is the "source of the *argumentum*," or "that from which there is drawn an *argumentum* appropriate to the proposed question" (*De top. diff.* 1.1174D).

Arguments are sequences of propositions consisting of one or more premises and a conclusion.<sup>4</sup> If a proposition is not provable because it is known "*per se*" to be true, Boethius calls it a *maximal proposition*. His example is "if equals are removed from equals, then equals remain" (*De top. diff.* 1.1176C).<sup>5</sup> A maximal proposition may appear as premise in an argument or as an external principle required to guarantee that the conclusion follows from the premises. In either case, Boethius maintains, though without explanation, the maximal proposition *contains* the other propositions<sup>6</sup> and indeed "*contains the whole proof*" (*De top. diff.* 2.1185–86C).

Although Boethius does not say so explicitly, his theory allows arguments with hypothetical as well as categorical conclusions. The proof of a hypothetical proposition does not, according to Boethius, require a syllogism all of whose premises are hypothetical.<sup>7</sup> Rather, in *De syllogismis hypotheticis* 1.2, he accepts the priority of the categorical syllogism and insists that a hypothetical premise is itself provable with a categorical syllogism.<sup>8</sup>

Abelard finds many problems in Boethius's account of argument and in particular in his claims about the *argumentum*. According to Boethius, neither the *argumentum* nor what it settles doubt about is a proposition. Rather, the *argumentum* is a *ratio*, a reason, which removes doubt with respect to a *res*, that is to say, with respect to a state-of-affairs.<sup>9</sup> *Argumenta* are either necessary or not, and so



bearers of modal properties, and in addition either probable or not probable.

The notion of probability appealed to here has its origin in Aristotle's *Topics* where it is used to characterize a dialectical syllogism as an argument in one of the canonical moods whose premises are each probable in the sense of being acceptable to everyone or to an appropriate group of experts. For Boethius, however, it is *argumenta* which are probable and although his examples of what is probable are categorical propositions, the arguments given in *De topicis differentiis* are not typically categorical syllogisms. In addition Boethius extends the notion of the probable to include whatever is accepted by one's opponent in an argument or by whoever is judging the exchange.

Like Aristotle in the *Topics*, Boethius classifies true predicative propositions and the corresponding questions in terms of the relations between the extensions of their subject and predicate terms (*De top. diff.* 1.1177D).<sup>10</sup> There are four possibilities: the predicate may be the genus of the subject, its definition, a property, or an accident. Other kinds of categorical propositions and questions may be reduced to one of these. Unlike Aristotle in the *Topics*, but perhaps following the suggestions made in *Prior Analytics* 1.27, Boethius also investigates the relationships which may be expressed in a true conditional proposition and asked about with the corresponding conditional question. Conditional propositions, he holds, indicate that one "thing" (*res*) is accompanied (*comitatur*) by another and conditional questions ask whether this is so. The "things" are often the same as those with which categorical propositions and questions are concerned but there are some, for example cause and effect, whose association cannot be expressed in a predicative proposition.

Boethius often, though not always, gives conditionals in the form "*si est/non est A, est/non est B*" which he explains as indicating that if there is something which is/is not *A*, then there is something which is/is not *B*.<sup>11</sup> Often the same thing is the intended subject of both antecedent and consequent, a member of a species and of its genus, for example, but not always, as with a cause and its effect, or relative opposites such as father and son.<sup>12</sup>

Boethius catalogues the different kinds of relationships between things which may be indicated with a true conditional in terms of the qualities of the antecedent and consequent. Conditionals whose

antecedent and consequent are both affirmative hold, as for example, when the antecedent is a species and the consequent a genus of it (*De top. diff.* 1.1178D–80A). The equivalence of contrapositives<sup>13</sup> guarantees that conditionals whose antecedent and consequent are both negative hold for just the same kinds of things. Simple conditionals whose antecedent and consequent differ in quality can hold, according to Boethius, only of things which are opposed in appropriate ways and, as we will see, they appear in some famous arguments of Abelard's to support the characteristic thesis of his logic and that of his followers, the Nominales, that all conditionals of mixed quality are false.<sup>14</sup> Boethius argues that a conditional with a negative antecedent and an affirmative consequent – “if something is *A*, then it is not *B*,” is true whenever *A* and *B* simply cannot occur together although both may perhaps fail to be present.<sup>15</sup> A conditional with a negative antecedent and an affirmative consequent – “if something is not *A*, then it is *B*” is, on the other hand, true only where *A* and *B* are immediate contraries – they can neither both be present nor both be absent.<sup>16</sup>

Boethius proposes to show which *loci* are appropriate to which syllogisms and in Book II of *De topicis differentiis* he introduces the syllogism as one kind of argument, the principal kind. His definition differs from that given in the *Prior Analytics* in a crucial respect. Where Aristotle defines a syllogism as “an expression in which from certain things being posited something other than what is posited follows of necessity from their being so” (*Pr. An.* 1.1, 24b19) Boethius adds “and conceded” to Aristotle's “posited” (*De top. diff.* 2.1183A). The additional requirement will provide Abelard with one clear distinction between syllogisms and conditionals. Enthymemes are arguments obtained from syllogisms by the omission of a premise. They are thus, according to Boethius, *imperfect* syllogisms.

After all these preliminaries we come finally to the *loci*. The problem of obtaining an *argumentum* is solved, according to Boethius, by locating an appropriate maximal proposition. Such a proposition, he tells us, may be found by considering the terms of the question, which he apparently assumes here to be categorical.<sup>17</sup> A maximal proposition states that particular kinds of things are related in particular ways. Two examples: (1) the external maximal proposition “that to which the definition of the genus does not apply is not a species of the genus so defined” is invoked to settle the question

of whether a tree is an animal by warranting the syllogism which concludes that it is not from the premises “an animal is a sensible animate substance” and “a tree is not an animate sensible substance” (*De top. diff.* 2.1187A). Abelard, as we will see, objects that in this case the proof does not need the help of a maximal proposition; (2) the external maximal proposition “what holds of the whole holds of the parts” and the premise “human beings are part of the world” support the enthymeme “the world is ruled by providence; therefore human beings are ruled by providence” or the corresponding conditional.<sup>18</sup>

A maximal proposition is distinguished by what Boethius calls its *locus differentia*. In the case of the pair just mentioned that is by being *from definition* and *from whole*. The *locus* for an argument, according to Boethius, consists of both the *locus differentia* and the maximal proposition. To discover an *argumentum* we consider the question, note, for example, that we are being asked whether the predicate is the genus of the subject, realize, say, that the properties of definition are relevant and then invoke an appropriate maximal proposition in conjunction with the relevant definition.

Boethius’s treatment of the *loci* in *De topicis differentiis* is extremely sketchy. He gives lists and classifications of *differentiae* and maximal propositions from both Themistius and Cicero with very brief examples. He apparently intends a topical argument to a categorical conclusion to be a categorical syllogism one of whose premises states that the terms about which the question is asked are related in the appropriate way. Sometimes the examples are categorical syllogisms, sometimes enthymemes, and sometimes conditional propositions. Although Boethius says absolutely nothing to indicate that they are connected in the way that Abelard proposes, the appearance of the last of these as putatively warranted by external maximal propositions, and the claim that conditionals may be proven with categorical arguments, perhaps suggested to him that the theory of the *loci* might be unified with that of the conditional.

## 1.2 Boethius’s theory of hypothetical propositions

The most striking feature of Boethius’s account of hypothetical syllogisms is that he clearly has no notion of the propositional compounding of propositional contents to form new contents of arbitrary complexity.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in his longer commentary on *De*

*Interpretatione*, he rejects the Stoic practice of preposing the negative particle to a categorical proposition as simply inviting ambiguity over which *term* is being negated (*In De in. maior* 10.261–262). Equally importantly he refuses to allow that the copulative conjunction “and” might combine conjuncts into a single proposition and insists that it serves no more than a listing function (*In De in. maior* 5.109).

Boethius claims in *De syllogismis hypotheticis* that nothing had been written in Latin on the hypothetical syllogism and only very little in Greek. In his commentary on Cicero’s *Topica* he does discuss the Stoic indemonstrables at some length but his knowledge of them seems to be entirely derived from Cicero’s very brief remarks. In *De syllogismis hypotheticis* Boethius proposes to give an account of hypothetical syllogisms on the basis, presumably, of the small amount of work that he knows by Aristotle’s successors, Theophrastus and Eudemus. The result is very curious. Since Boethius has no concept of a propositional operation he considers in turn all the syllogisms in which each form of conditional acceptable to him may occur. In addition to the four forms of simple conditional mentioned above and the corresponding disjunctions, he also allows three compound forms of the conditional which may be obtained by having a categorical as antecedent or consequent to a simple conditional or a simple conditional as both antecedent and consequent.

According to Boethius a conditional proposition, or consequence (*consequentia*), is a proposition indicating that something holds on a condition which is marked with the connective *si* or equivalently, he tells us, with *cum* (*De hyp. syll.* 1.3.1).<sup>20</sup> Simple disjunctions are equivalent to simple conditionals in which the antecedent is the opposite of the first disjunct and the consequent is the second disjunct.<sup>21</sup> Although the antecedent and consequent of a conditional may contain one of the modal terms “necessary” or “possible,” they do not usually contain an expression of quantity and so are indefinite.

Having said that *si* and *cum* have exactly the same meaning as indications of a condition on which something holds, Boethius goes on to claim that they may be used to mark two distinct relationships between antecedent and consequent. A true conditional formed with *cum*, he implies,<sup>22</sup> is used to indicate that the antecedent and the consequent are associated *secundum accidens*, that is, *whenever* the

antecedent is true the consequent is true, as in the case of “if fire is hot, the heavens are spherical” (*De hyp. syll.* 1.3.7). Here the antecedent does not explain the consequent nor the consequent the antecedent. If there is such an explanatory connection between them, the conditional expresses a consequence of nature (*consequentia naturae*), e.g. “if something is human, it is an animal” and “if the earth lies between the sun and the moon, an eclipse of the moon follows” (*De hyp. syll.* 1.3.7). Unfortunately Boethius tells us nothing more in *De syllogismis hypotheticis* about consequences of nature.<sup>23</sup>

What Boethius goes on to say about conditionals in *De syllogismis hypotheticis* is presumably intended to apply equally well to both consequences of nature and those which hold *secundum accidens*: to “oppose” a conditional, he tells us, one must “destroy its substance.” That is to say, since the necessity of a conditional lies in an “immutable consequence,” we must show that when the antecedent is posited, the consequent “does not immediately (*statim*) follow” (*De hyp. syll.* 1.9.4). A necessary condition, at least, for the truth of a conditional is thus that it is not possible for the antecedent to be true and the consequent false at the same time.

Although Boethius claims that Aristotle had nothing to say on the hypothetical syllogism, he nevertheless sets at the center of his own account a principle for the logic of conditionals which he takes from *Prior Analytics* 2.4. Aristotle is concerned there to show that although the truth of the conclusion of a categorical syllogism is compatible with the falsity of its premises, the truth of the conclusion cannot follow from the falsity of the premises. Boethius’s version of the claim is that:

It is not necessary that the same is when the same both is and is not, as when *A* is, if for this reason it is necessary that *B* is, if the same *A* is not, it is not necessary that *B* is, that is, that it is because *A* is not. (*De hyp. syll.* 1.4.2)

Boethius claims to prove the principle by arguing that an impossibility follows from supposing that both “if *A* is, then *B* is” and “if *A* is not, then *B* is” are true. The proof seems confused and wrongly to conclude, unlike Aristotle, that the impossibility which would follow from both conditionals being true is that *B* both is and is not. What Aristotle argues, and Abelard sees, is that what follows is “if *B* is not, then *B* is” which both regard as impossible. Appeals to this last, so-called *connexive* principle,<sup>24</sup> and others will be the

characteristic feature of Abelardian logic and, as we will see, ultimately responsible for its failure.

## II. ABELARD'S GENERAL THEORY OF ENTAILMENT

### II.1 *Propositionality and propositional connectives*

Unlike any of the ancient authors to whom he had access Abelard clearly understands the nature of propositionality and of propositional combination. If he was the first to achieve this understanding in the Middle Ages, and there is no evidence to the contrary, he must be recognized as one of the greatest of all philosophical logicians. Peter Geach has claimed the central discovery for Frege but it was well known in the twelfth century. What Geach calls the *Frege Point* provides the foundation for the development of propositional logic with the proposal that a distinction must be made for speech acts between *force* and *propositional content*. For example, an assertion of "Socrates is running" has the same propositional content as the question "Is Socrates running?" but a different force. With the first I assert that Socrates is running, with the second I ask whether it is the case that Socrates is running. The propositional content in both is *that Socrates is running*. The force in the first is assertion, in the second interrogation.

In *De interpretatione* 4, Aristotle observes that there are various different kinds of speech act and relegates those other than assertion to the rhetorician and the poet. Abelard thus does not have much to say about the differences between them but he does notice that one and the same content, *that the King comes*, may be given different force – optative force in "Would *that the king comes*" and, as Abelard construes it, assertoric force in "I hope *that the King comes*" (*LI De in.* 3.5.13, G 374.21–26).

Boethius uses the terms "assertion" (*enuntiatio*) and "proposition" (*propositio*) interchangeably, and distinguishes a proposition, or assertion, from other kinds of speech act by its being true or false. He thus makes it difficult for later writers to refer separately to the true or false propositional content of each kind of speech act and to the particular speech act of asserting a propositional content. Abelard, too, often fails to make the required distinction but when he

is being careful he does make it and notes in particular that although the component propositions of the true conditional "if Socrates is a pearl, then Socrates is a stone" are both false, they are not asserted (*proponitur*) when the whole is asserted (*TI* 90).<sup>25</sup>

An operation "*F*" is a propositional operation if it takes a propositional content "*p*" as its argument and yields as its value, "*F*(*p*)", a propositional content available for use in all the various kinds of speech acts. For example a conditional propositional content is formed by combining two propositional contents with the operation "*if* ( ), *then* ( )." A propositional operation is truth-functional if the truth-value of the result of applying the operation is determined solely by the truth-value of its arguments.

The simplest propositional operation, but also the one that is crucial in distinguishing Abelardian from Boethian and Aristotelian logic, is the truth-functional operation of propositional negation which has for its value a propositional content which is true if the argument is false and false if it is true. Neither Aristotle nor Boethius provide such an operation. Both treat an affirmation and the corresponding negation as distinct speech acts, not as assertions of two different propositional contents with the negation obtained from the affirmation by a propositional operation. Abelard does precisely this, calling the operation of propositional negation *extinctive*, or *destructive, negation*: "not (*S* is *P*)," is true just in case "*S* is *P*" is false. For affirmative categorical propositions, he also allows a form of negation that modifies the predicate (*Dial.* 477.4–26). This "Aristotelian" negation, "*S* is not *P*," Abelard calls *separative*, or *remotive, negation* and it is true just in case *S* exists<sup>26</sup> and "*S* is *P*" is false.<sup>27</sup>

The extinctive negation of a proposition is its contradictory and the separative negation a contrary (*Dial.* 173ff.). Abelard notes that extinctive and separative negation may be combined and that extinctive negation may be iterated to produce, when doubled, a proposition equivalent in the sense of necessarily coinciding in truth-value with the original affirmation. He denies, however, for reasons which will become clear, that an affirmation entails or is entailed by its extinctive double negation (*Dial.* 178.36–179.33).

Abelard finds interesting support for this distinction of negations in Aristotle's treatment of universal propositions. In *De interpretatione*, though not elsewhere, Aristotle gives the contradictory

opposite of "Every *A* is *B*" as "Not every *A* is *B*." Boethius claims that this means the same as "Some *A* is not *B*," the form which he follows Aristotle in using in his presentation of the theory of the categorical syllogism (e.g. *In De in. maior* 7.164ff.). Reading Aristotle's preposed negation as propositional, however, Abelard insists to the contrary that the two propositions have quite distinct meanings. "Not (every *A* is *B*)" is the extinctive negation and so the contradictory opposite of "Every *A* is *B*." It is entailed by "No *A* is *B*," itself a contrary of "Every *A* is *B*," and is true if either there are no *As* or *As* exist but none of them are *Bs*. "Some *A* is not *B*," on the other hand, is entailed by "Every *A* is not *B*," a contrary of "Every *A* is *B*," and it is true only if there exist some *As*. Finally, "No *A* is *B*" is the extinctive negation of "Some *A* is *B*,"<sup>28</sup> and so true either if there are no *As* or if there are *As* but none of them are *Bs*.<sup>29</sup> Abelard thus lays out a rectangle of opposition where Aristotle had his famous square (*LI De in.* 3.07.37–49, G 408–11).

Giving the example of "both Apollo is prophet and Jupiter thunders," Boethius had claimed that the copulative connective "and" (*et*) does not form a single proposition from two propositions but serves in effect merely to punctuate a list. The following remark would make a singularly appropriate epitaph for Abelard the logician:

For since he concedes that "if it's day, then it's light" is a single proposition in which different propositions are reduced to the sense of one proposition by the preposed conjunction, I do not see why "both Apollo is a prophet and Jupiter thunders," cannot be said to be a single proposition, just as "when Apollo is a prophet, Jupiter thunders." Whence each may have a single dividing opposite, so that as we say "not (if it's day, then it's light)," we should also say "not (both Apollo is a prophet and Jupiter thunders)." (*LI De in.* 3.05.41, G 380.4–11)<sup>30</sup>

Abelard perfectly understood the nature of propositional operations and their generality. The copulative conjunction and the disjunction "or," he goes on to tell us, may connect any number of components into a single proposition (*LI De in.* 3.05.90, G 387.1–21). Tragically for the history of logic, as we will see, he did not realize until too late the consequences of trying to combine plausible principles for the manipulation of the copulative connective with what he took to be equally compelling intuitions about the operation of negation.



## II.2 *Perfect and imperfect entailment*

Abelard introduces *loci* at the beginning of *Treatise III* of the *Dialectica* by remarking that just as prior to his account of the categorical syllogisms he had to say something about categorical propositions, so, before he deals with hypothetical syllogisms, he must say something about hypothetical propositions. This involves him immediately with *loci* since it is *loci*, according to the theory presented in the *Dialectica*, which are the source of the true conditional and disjunctive propositions employed in such arguments.

Much later in the *Dialectica* Abelard argues that the classical definitions of a *locus* as “the source of an *argumentum*” or as that “from whence an *argumentum* is drawn to settle a proposed question” are appropriate for the theory of argumentation but not for the theory of the conditional (*Dial.* 454–455). At the beginning, however, the problem is simply that these definitions are too narrow to connect *loci* and consequences. The new definition, which is apparently entirely Abelard’s own, is that a *locus* is the “power of” or, as we would say, provides the warrant for an entailment (*vis inferentiae*). For example, the conditional “if something is a human being, then it’s an animal” is true because of the relationship, properly called a *habitude* (*habitudo*), in which human being stands to animal (*Dial.* 253.16–23), that is, as a species to its genus. The *locus differentia*, according to Abelard, is thus the antecedent thing (*res*) in the proved consequence; in this case human being. If, however, a dialectician is asked to justify his assertion of the conditional with the standard question “whence the *locus*?” (*unde locus?*), he should reply “from species.” He is not being asked what the *locus* is but rather in virtue of what fact about human beings the entailment holds (*Dial.* 264–266). The next two hundred pages or so of the *Dialectica* are devoted to exploring the application of this new broad definition of *locus*.

I translate Abelard’s *inferentia* as “entailment” because it requires both necessity and relevance.<sup>31</sup> The relation of entailment, or consecution (*consecutio*) is expressed, either in a true consequence<sup>32</sup> – that is, in a true conditional or disjunctive proposition – or in an argument whose conditionalization is true,<sup>33</sup> and the necessity of a true consequence lies in there being a meaning relation, and so a relevant connection, between antecedent and consequent:

Entailment consists in the necessity of consecution, that is, in that the sense (*sententia*) of the consequent is required (*exigitur*) by the sense (*sensus*) of the antecedent, as is asserted with a hypothetical proposition . . . (*Dial.* 253.28–30; cf. *LI Top.* 238.6–9)

We will see below that Abelard often explicates this meaning relation in terms of the antecedent in some way *containing* the consequent.

Entailments are either *perfect* or *imperfect*. A perfect entailment is one which satisfies the requirement of containment in virtue of what Abelard calls the structure, or form (*complexio*), of the propositions involved (*Dial.* 253.31). An *imperfect* entailment, on the other hand, is necessary not in virtue of its structure but rather because of non-formal truths which hold, as we would say, of every possible or impossible world (*de natura rerum*). Such truths are expressed in maximal propositions and it is the assignment of the appropriate *locus differentia* in conjunction with the maximal proposition which provides the required external guarantee of the necessity of an imperfect entailment. Abelard's main concern here is with such entailments, but to characterize them he has first to give an account of the purely formal character of perfect entailment.

Earlier in the *Dialectica* Abelard gives Aristotle's definition of a syllogism from the *Prior Analytics* (*Dial.* 232.4–6).<sup>34</sup> In glossing the definition, however, it is Boethius's version to which he refers with its requirement that the premises be conceded as well as posited. This condition is added, he holds, to show that we are concerned with an *argumentum* and to distinguish syllogisms from conditionals whose structure (*complexio*) has the same form (*forma*) (*Dial.* 232.8–12). The perfection of syllogisms as *entailments* is indicated in Aristotle's definition, according to Abelard, by the qualification that the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises themselves in that nothing extrinsic is required to guarantee this.<sup>35</sup>

All of the various moods of categorical and hypothetical syllogisms are perfect entailments. Aristotle, however, distinguishes the first figure of the categorical syllogism and Boethius the first figures of simple and composite hypothetical syllogisms as having a perfection not possessed by the other figures. Let us call this second kind of perfection *evident perfection*. According to Abelard, the secondary figures are imperfect in this sense, because they are not immediately accepted but rather have to be proved by reduction to the first figure

by means of the external principles of conversion and proof by *reductio ad impossibile*. So while no external principle is required to warrant the inference of the conclusion from the premises of a categorical or hypothetical syllogism, principles which are more evident must be deployed to show someone who does not see this that the conclusion does indeed follow from the premises in the case of the secondary figures.

It is clear from Abelard's description that perfection of entailment is a property of form and from his further explanation that his conception of formality is one which we share. The conditionalization of a syllogism is perfect, he tells us, because "whatever terms you substitute, whether they are compatible or incompatible with one another, the consecution can in no way be broken" (*Dial.* 255.310–334).<sup>36</sup> In the context it is clear that *uniform substitution* is what Abelard has in mind and so the property of "formal truth" which Quine has popularized in the twentieth century and which has generally been said to have had its origins in the work of Bolzano.<sup>37</sup>

Abelard's version of the substitutional criterion of formal truth provides him with, as a necessary condition for perfection, the requirement that *uniform substitution preserve consecution*. He clearly does not regard it as sufficient since he argues that the substitutionally true entailment "if every animal is an animate being, then every animal is an animate being" is not perfect because missing from the antecedent is the proposition "*every animate being is an animate being*" which is needed to show that "the same thing is contained in itself" (*Dial.* 255.19–30).<sup>38</sup> Abelardian logic thus includes the principle of reflexivity " $p \models p$ " and its conditionalization " $\models p \rightarrow p$ " but classifies the entailment as imperfect. Although he does not address the question, Abelard apparently holds that it is only instances of the canonical moods of categorical and hypothetical syllogisms which are perfect entailments.<sup>39</sup>

### II.3 Syllogisms and loci

Practically the whole of the rest of *Treatise III* of the *Dialectica* is concerned with the fact that uniform substitution plus whatever other condition might be imposed is not a test for entailment but rather for perfect entailment.<sup>40</sup> Imperfect entailments are conditionals which fail the substitution test but in which the consequent nevertheless

follows necessarily from the antecedent. So, for example, Abelard points out, the conditional which results from dropping one of the conjuncts from the antecedent of a perfect entailment may still be connected necessarily to the consequent in virtue of the nature of things (*ex natura rerum*). This is so, he claims, in the case of both (C1) "if every human is an animal, then every human is an animate being" and (C2) "if every human is an animal, then no human is a stone" (*Dial.* 254.31–255.11). His use of (C2) as an example of an entailment is striking since, as I said, one of the defining features of his logic is the theorem that a conditional whose antecedent and consequent differ in quality cannot be true. We should note, however, that he goes on immediately to designate the connection between antecedent and consequent in these two cases as perfection of *necessity* rather than of *construction*, and characterizes this not in terms of the antecedent requiring the consequent but rather simply as the inseparable association of the things signified – "the nature of animal . . . does not suffer animal ever to exist without animation" (*Dial.* 255.19–30). That is to say, it satisfies Boethius's requirement for the truth of a conditional. As we will see, according to Abelard, this condition is necessary but not sufficient for entailment. We have to wait, however, until we are well into the discussion of the individual *loci* for this point to be made clearly and before we come to it Abelard has to settle precisely how appeal to a *locus* may warrant an imperfect entailment.

Abelard observes that all entailments which fail the substitution test pass another in which substitution is restricted to terms signifying things which stand in the same relationship as those signified by the terms substituted for. For example, every conditional is true which is obtained by substituting for "human" and for "animal" in "if something is a human, then it is an animal" terms signifying things standing in the habitude of species to genus. If we restrict substitution in this way, then consecution is preserved in virtue of the *nature of things*.

What is needed next is an account of the different relations between things which will support true conditionals and an analysis of the nature of this support. Abelard sought to provide both of these by appealing to and radically developing the theory of topical inference which he had inherited from Boethius. His claim is that if we consider entailments which are not perfect we will see that their

truth depends on the existence of relationships which can be identified with some of the *loci* listed by Boethius. Such imperfect entailments, Abelard argues, can be perfected by the assignment of the appropriate *locus* (*Dial.* 256.34–257.23).

Boethius as we saw, claims to provide *loci* appropriate for syllogisms and although in none of his examples is a maximal proposition invoked to guarantee an instance of a canonical mood of a categorical or hypothetical syllogism, it is to such syllogisms that Abelard and his contemporaries took Boethius to be referring (*Dial.* 258.9). Abelard on the contrary holds that *loci* are required only where perfection is lacking and that to perfect, or prove, an imperfect entailment one must assign the appropriate habitude and invoke a suitable maximal proposition. The maximal proposition is a rule applicable where the habitude exists which has the *differentia* corresponding to that habitude. No habitude is required for the application of the rules of syllogistic entailment and so no *locus* is required for a syllogism. The claim that syllogisms need no support from *loci* was controversial, however, and became another characteristic thesis of the Nominales (*Dial.* 256–263).<sup>41</sup>

Abelard acknowledges, of course, that a given categorical or hypothetical syllogism is an instance of a general rule. The conditional “if every human is an animal and every animal is an animate being, then every human is an animate being” instantiates, for example, the rule for the first mood of the first categorical figure that “if something is predicated of something universally, and some other thing is predicated universally of the predicate, then the second predicate is predicated universally of the first subject” (*Dial.* 237.6–8). Abelard insists, however, that such rules are not maximal propositions since they have no *differentiae* restricting the appropriate substitution class to items related by one of the local habitudes.

Abelard considers the possibility that Boethius might be understood as indicating that the *locus* for a syllogism is that which warrants the enthymeme obtained by dropping one of the premises from the syllogism. He argues that, in general, *loci* for categorical syllogisms cannot be obtained in this way since the only *loci* which may be appealed to where both premise and conclusion are of the same quality and there is no local habitude between their terms are the non-Boethian *loci from the predicate* and *from the subject*. If the enthymeme contains negative propositions, on the other hand,

the only *locus* which could be invoked is that *from opposites* – “if one of a pair of opposites belongs to something, the other does not.” According to Abelard, however, the maximal propositions associated with each of these *loci* are false and so cannot provide the necessity required by the syllogism (*Dial.* 262.1–28). Likewise, he argues, an attempt to appeal in a similar way to the *loci from antecedent and consequent* to warrant hypothetical syllogisms fails because the associated maximal propositions are entirely lacking in probative force (*Dial.* 262.1–28). Someone who is in doubt about whether “*q*” follows from “*p*” will be equally doubtful about the premise asserting that “*p*” is antecedent to “*q*” and the maximal proposition “if the antecedent is posited, then so is the consequent” will be of no help in convincing him of the truth of the entailment.

Abelard suggests that rather than giving *loci* for syllogisms Boethius was proposing a way of providing evidence for non-evident perfect entailments by appealing to the principle that if an enthymeme is necessary then so is the corresponding syllogism. That is to say, Abelard accepts monotonicity, or weakening: “ $p \models r \mid p, q \models r$ ” and its conditionalization: “ $p \rightarrow r \mid \models p \& q \rightarrow r$ .” Since he also accepts reflexivity he is thus committed to simplification: “ $p, q \models p$ ,” “ $p, q \models q$ ,” and conditional simplification “ $\models p \& q \rightarrow p$ ,” “ $\models p \& q \rightarrow q$ ”<sup>42</sup> and he explicitly accepts these principles here.<sup>43</sup>

The problem for the logician is to show that the consequent of a putative entailment does in fact follow from the antecedent. In the case of “if something is a human being, then it is an animal,” for example, the habitude is assigned by noting that human being is a species of animal. The assignment alone, however, is not enough to prove the truth of the conditional. What is required in addition are principles which connect appropriate habitudes to true conditionals. These principles, according to Abelard, are the maximal propositions of topical theory.

In accordance with Abelard’s new definition of *locus* as the warrant for an entailment, Boethius’s division of *locus* into *locus differentia* and maximal proposition thus provides the two elements required in the proof of a true non-complexional conditional:

The *locus differentia* is that *thing (res)* in the habitude of which to the other consists the firmness of the consecution, so when we assert “if something is a human being, then it is an animal” human being which is posited in the

antecedent in order that animal, which follows, is entailed, is brought forward in virtue of its being a species (of animal). The maximal proposition is a proposition *containing the sense* of many consequences which shows, according to the power of the same habitude, the common mode of proof which their *differentiae* have in them. As in the case of all these consequences: "if something is a human being, then it is an animal," "if something is a rose, then it is a flower," "if something is redness, then it is a color," etc. . . . a maximal proposition such as the following is invoked: "of whatever the species is predicated, the genus is also predicated." (*Dial.* 263.7–18)

According to the theory that Abelard presents in the *Dialectica*, true conditionals may thus be proved in arguments with the following structure:

Maximal proposition  
Assignment of *locus differentia*  
 Conclusion (a consecution)

An Abelardian proof of consecution and so of the truth of a conditional thus seems at first sight to be obtained from a Boethian topical categorical syllogism by conditionalizing and introducing the maximal proposition into the argument. Abelard will insist, however, that this is precisely what one cannot in general do. There are many valid enthymemes, he holds, which cannot be conditionalized to form true conditionals and the role played by the maximal proposition in the proof of a conditional is quite different from the role played by the maximal proposition in providing the *argumentum* to prove a categorical conclusion.

According to Abelard maximal propositions employed in the proof of conditionals must "*contain the sense* of many conditionals" and by means of the same *differentia*, or habitude, show that the antecedent follows from the consequent in each of the contained conditionals. So, for example, although the maximal proposition "of whatever the species is predicated the genus is predicated" is verbally categorical it is equivalent to the conditional: "if a species is predicated of something, then every genus of that species is predicated the same thing" (*Dial.* 263.18–20; cf. also 267.33, 317.26). Abelard argues that it is the thing (*res*) which appears in the proved consequences which is the *locus differentia* and it is this thing which is contained in the maximal proposition. This leads him to interpret the general terms appearing in maximal propositions not as the names of second

order properties – “species” for example standing for the second order property of being a species – but rather as names of the *res* appearing in the proved consequence. “Species” here thus stands for human being as well as for all other species.

#### II.4 *The necessity of entailment and the refutation of probabilism*

To serve in the proof of a consequence a maximal proposition must be true and so, since according to the *Dialectica* it is a conditional,<sup>44</sup> it must itself satisfy the conditions to be met for the truth of such a proposition. The first condition noted by Abelard is a version of Boethius’s requirement that the truth of the antecedent is inseparable from that of the consequent. I will call this condition *N*, for necessity:

The sense of a hypothetical proposition lies in consecution, that is in that one thing follows . . . on another. (*N*) The truth of consecution lies in necessity, in that what is said (*id quod dicitur*) in the antecedent cannot be without that which is proposed in the consequent. (*Dial.* 271.26–30)

This requirement of necessary association was not uncontroversial. I noted above that, according to Boethius, *argumenta* in dialectical arguments must be probable but that his examples of topical arguments are not always, or even typically, categorical syllogisms. Without Aristotle’s *Topics* to help them, twelfth-century logicians thus had to decide just where the necessity and probability of the *argumentum* are located. Abelard argues that they must be properties of the *connection* between the *argumentum* and the conclusion rather than of the *argumentum* considered in itself. Since a dialectical *argumentum* requires probability but not necessity it follows that in a local argument the *loci differentiae* and maximal propositions are required to guarantee only a probable connection between premise and conclusion.

Perhaps prompted by Boethius’s practice in *De topicis differentiis*, some of Abelard’s contemporaries apparently did not distinguish between the use of *loci* to warrant arguments and their use to warrant conditionals and allowed, in effect, that one may obtain a true conditional by the conditionalization of any locally warranted enthymeme. They thus held that the connection between the antecedent and consequent in a true conditional is probable but did



not require it to be necessary (*Dial.* 271.38–272.1);<sup>45</sup> and so, according to Abelard, identified truth with opinion since what is probable is what appears to be so to the appropriate audience.

Abelard easily finds authorities to support condition *N* against this probabilistic account of the conditional and points out that it manifestly fails to be satisfied by many conditionals which the probabilistic reading should concede (*Dial.* 271.35–272.25). For example, since it is more likely that a peasant will be thrashed than a soldier, the *locus from the less likely* warrants for the probabilist the easily falsifiable conditional “if a soldier is thrashed, then a peasant is thrashed” (*Dial.* 275.1–16). More compelling, and much more interesting, is the objection that the transitivity of entailment (i.e., “ $p \rightarrow q, q \rightarrow r \models p \rightarrow r$ ”) allows one to infer conditionals which even the probabilist must reject from conditionals which he accepts. In particular, Abelard argues, the *locus from immediate contraries* has the greatest probability but nevertheless the conditional “if something is not well, then it is sick” is false since taken in conjunction with conditionals agreed to be true it entails the embarrassing impossibility (*inconvenientia*) “if something does not exist, then it exists.”

Abelard does not give the argument, but it is reported by other writers (cf. *Introductiones Montane minores*, 67) and can be reconstructed from what he says elsewhere in the *Dialectica*. I will call it the *Embarrassing Argument Against Immediates* (EI):

- (EI1) if something does not exist, then it is not well;
- (EI2) if something is not well, then it is sick;
- (EI3) if something is sick, then it exists; so, by transitivity,
- (EI4) if something does not exist, then it is sick, and
- (EI5) if something does not exist, then it exists.

(EI1) is warranted by appeal to the *locus from part to whole for the predicate*. It applies here since “does not exist” includes all and only things which do not exist while the extension of the infinite noun “not-well,” according to Abelard, includes both all non-existent things and all existing things which are not well. The former is thus contained in the extension of the latter. (EI2) is warranted by the *locus from immediates* with the maximal proposition “if one of a pair of immediates is removed from something, the other is predicated of the same.” (EI3) holds by the *locus from part to whole for the predicate*. Abelard insists that both (EI4) and (EI5) are impossible

and entirely lacking in probability. What is true rather is (*EI*<sub>4</sub><sup>\*</sup>) if something does not exist, then it is not sick.

Abelard argues that the use of the *locus from immediates* leads to embarrassing problems here because it is employed as if it were completely general in its application whereas in fact immediates are exhaustive and exclusive only with respect to their proper subjects. In the case of being well and being sick this subject is a member of the genus animal. A qualification (*constantia*) indicating that we are concerned only with existing animals thus has to be included in some way in the conditional and the putative maximal proposition. Qualifications of this kind are marked, according to Abelard, with the Latin word *cum*. We have already seen that Boethius uses the word in his account of the conditional and Abelard cites the example of “when (*cum*) fire is hot, the heavens are spherical” to illustrate its temporal use. It may also, he says, be used to mark a condition, as in “if (*cum*) something is human, then it is an animal,” or a cause, for example “hang him, for (*cum*) he is a thief.”

There are three ways in which the qualification might be incorporated into the conditional. In the case of *cum* as a conditional connective we have the following:<sup>46</sup> (i) “if something is an animal, then (if it is not well, it is sick)”; (ii) “if something is not well, then (if it is an animal, it is sick)”; and (iii) “if (if something is an animal, then if it is not well), then it is sick.” (i) is false, Abelard argues, because the antecedent is true, say, in the case of Socrates, but we have just proved with (*EI*) that the consequent is false. (ii) is false because the term “sick” applies only to animals but not to all animals, and the less general cannot follow from the more general; Socrates is an animal, for example, but he is not sick. (iii) is false, finally, because no affirmative categorical proposition follows from a conditional since the truth of the conditional entails nothing about the existence of the subject required for the truth of the categorical affirmation. Similar arguments hold against the interpretation of *cum* as a causal connective and against its use as a temporal connective – except in the case in which it is added to the conditional to qualify the antecedent “if (something is not well when it is an animal), then it is sick,” that is to say, “if at the same time something is both an animal and not well, then it is sick.”

Abelard, as I said, gives Boethius's *consequentia secundum accidens* as his example of the temporal use of *cum*. He discusses

temporal propositions at length in the *Dialectica* as part of his treatment of Boethius's curious claims about compound conditionals, explaining that they are true if their components coincide in truth value at all times. If this is how he wishes us to understand the temporal use of *cum* as a qualification, however, there is an interesting problem with Abelard's treatment of the *locus from immediates*. Construed as asserting an omnitemporal coincidence in truth-value, the antecedent "something is not well when it is an animal" is true only if being an animal coincides with not being well, that is, only if all animals are always sick. But this is false so there cannot be a sound argument *from immediates*.

What Abelard needs is a temporal connective true at a time just in case both components are true at that time. The proposition asserting omnitemporal coincidence in truth-value is simply the generalization of this connective over all times.<sup>47</sup> In fact he seems nowhere to make this distinction but the related one between "as-of-now" and "simple" consequences will play an important role in later accounts of the conditional.

Abelard goes on to argue that one qualification to the antecedent is not enough to avoid embarrassment and that the appropriate form of the conditional is rather "if something is not well when it is an animal and every animal which is not well is sick, then it is sick," an instance of the rule "if some one of a pair of immediates is removed from something and it remains one of the kind of things to which the immediates apply, then the other immediate is predicated of it." This rule is not, however, a maximal proposition, because it includes the specification of the habitude which it warrants and so holds for all uniform substitutions (*Dial.* 404.15–26).

Since Abelard agrees with Boethius that the only candidates for true conditionals with a simple negation as antecedent and a simple affirmation as consequent are those whose predicate terms are related as immediates,<sup>48</sup> his argument, he believes, shows that no such conditional is true.

## II.5 *The relevance of entailment*

With probabilism defeated Abelard concludes that necessity is required for consecution and proceeds to an examination of the relationship between conditional and categorical assertions. A

conditional such as “if something is human, then it is an animal” expresses what Abelard calls a law of nature (*lex naturae*) which holds eternally and independently of the existence of humans and animals (*Dial.* 280.13). Categorical affirmations and separative negations, on the other hand, whether they signify mere inherence (*de inesse*) or its necessity, are true only if the extensions of their subject terms are not empty.

Earlier in the *Dialectica* Abelard famously distinguishes the *de re* from the *de sensu* account of the semantics of modal propositions. Read *de re* “every *A* is necessarily *B*” asserts of each existing *A* that *it itself* is necessarily *B*. This is false if *A* is any kind of created being, since God alone exists necessarily (*Dial.* 200.33–201.17). Read *de sensu*, on the other hand, it is the claim that the proposition “every *A* is a *B*,” or what it asserts, is necessarily, and so eternally, true, which is again false if *A* is any kind of creature. Furthermore, Abelard argues, the extinctive negation “no *A* is *B*” does not entail the conditional “if something is an *A*, then it is not a *B*.” The entailment obviously fails where “no *A* is *B*” may be true but is not necessarily so; but Abelard goes on to insist that it fails even where *A* and *B* are opposed, as, for example, man and ass, and “no *A* is *B*” is a necessary truth, since no conditional of the form “if something is an *A*, then it is not a *B*” is true.

For Abelard the *truth* of a conditional requires more than the inseparability of the truth of the antecedent from that of the consequent. Something more, that is, than the satisfaction of condition *N*. Although it is not possible for “every human is an animal” to be true and “if something is a human, then it is an animal” to be false, the latter is not entailed by the former. Furthermore, in general, Abelard claims, because consecution does not entail existence, the only categoricals which follow from conditionals are separative negations. Thus, although the conditional, “if something is human, it is not a stone,” is false, it entails “no human is a stone.” On the other hand, the only categorical which entails a conditional is one which states the habitude which warrants that conditional. For example, “animal is the genus of human” provides the warrant for the consecution “if something is a human then it is an animal” and so entails it (*Dial.* 283.12–19). To establish just when such an entailment holds requires, however, a “more subtle investigation”:

There seem to be two kinds of necessity of consecution. A broader kind, which is found where the antecedent cannot hold without the consequent. Another narrower kind, where not only can the antecedent not be true without the consequent but also of itself requires (*exigit*) the consequent. This latter necessity is the proper sense of consecution and the guarantee of immutable truth. As, for example, when it is said "if something is human, then it is an animal," human is properly antecedent to animal since it of itself requires animal. Because animal is contained in the substance of human, animal is always predicated with human. (*Dial.* 283.37–284.6)

One authority cited by Abelard for the distinction between necessities is Boethius's observation in *In Topica Ciceronis* that "antecedents are such that when they are posited something else immediately (*statim*) follows of necessity" (*In Cic. Top.* 1123D–1124A). The reference to "necessity" has already provided evidence for condition *N* and Abelard now claims that the qualification "immediately" indicates that for consecution the sense (*sensus*) of the consequent must be contained in that of the antecedent. Curiously he does not mention the appearance of the same qualification in Boethius's test for falsity of conditionals. We saw above that in his initial general characterization of entailment Abelard stipulated that the antecedent requires (*exigit*) the consequent and he repeats that here with the explanation that being animal is contained in being human. Elsewhere he says, among other things, that the antecedent contains the consequent, that the consequent is understood in the antecedent, and, in the case of perfect entailments, that the construction, or form, of the antecedent requires the consequent. Let us call this stricter requirement for the truth of a conditional condition *R*, for relevance.

Abelard characterizes his distinction as between two kinds of necessity, but in our terms what he is proposing is that something more than necessity is required for the truth of a conditional. Condition *N* already guarantees that there is no possible situation in which the antecedent is true and the consequent false. Condition *R* requires in addition that there be some genuine connection between them and the various glosses cover familiar suggestions about how to ensure this. The antecedent is required to be relevant to the consequent in that its truth is genuinely sufficient for that of the consequent and this is guaranteed by the consequent being in some way contained in the antecedent.<sup>49</sup>

While the satisfaction of condition *R* is required for entailment and the truth of a conditional, all that is needed in argument is that the truth of the premises guarantee the truth of the conclusion. It must not be possible for the premises all to be true and the conclusion false. The validity of an argument may thus be defined as the satisfaction of condition *N* alone:

Every *argumentum* is said to be necessary which is so connected with its conclusion, either by the nature of things or the property of terms or the construction itself, that things are not able to come about as the *argumentum* says without their being as the conclusion proposes. On the other hand, only that is necessarily antecedent which includes in its sense the sense of the consequent. Whence although all necessary antecedents may be necessary *argumenta*, the converse does not hold. For even if "Socrates is human" necessarily argues that he is not a stone, the former is not necessarily antecedent to the latter. (*LI Top.* 309.13–22)

Thus, one cannot conditionalize a valid argument to obtain a true conditional and so the Deduction Theorem does not hold for Abelard's logic, a feature which shocked his student John of Salisbury.<sup>50</sup>

The explanation of Abelard's reference to two kinds of necessity is to be found in his theory of the relation of substances to their properties and accidents. In the *Isagoge* Porphyry introduces a distinction between *separable* accidents such as being seated for humans, and *inseparable* accidents such as being black for crows,<sup>51</sup> and gives as the general definition of an accident that it is something which may be present or absent without the corruption of its subject. While separable accidents are features which are present at one time but not at another, inseparable accidents cannot actually be separated from their subjects. A property, for example the ability to laugh, or to learn geometry is, according to Boethius, an inseparable accident of all and only the members of a particular species, in this case humans.

To reconcile the existence of inseparable accidents with the general definition of an accident, Porphyry proposes that although such accidents cannot actually be removed from their subjects they may be removed in thought in the sense that, for example, we can conceive of, or understand, a crow which is not black. It is no part of the nature, and so no part of the definition of a crow that it is black

even though a crow which is not black cannot exist. Abelard follows Porphyry in referring to such conceivability as an “ability” to be separated but conceivability certainly does not for him imply the possibility of being actual.<sup>52</sup> Rather, the connection between being a crow and being black and the connection between being human and being able to laugh is that of condition *N* necessity.

Abelard notices in his discussion of inseparable accidents that although the conditional “if Socrates is a stone, then Socrates is a pearl” satisfies condition *N*, it is false since being a stone does not require being a particular kind of stone. In the *Dialectica* this feature of condition *N* provides another argument for condition *R*. If we required only inseparability for entailment, the conditional “if Socrates is a stone, then Socrates is an ass” would be true, since “what entirely cannot be, cannot be without the consequent” (*Dial.* 285.8–12). Abelard never announces as a principle that anything follows from an impossibility but he clearly sees that it holds if the satisfaction of condition *N* is all that is required for the truth of a conditional.<sup>53</sup> He thus suggests that the requirement of inseparability, “this cannot be without that” cannot capture consecution because it is categorical rather than hypothetical (*Dial.* 285.5).

Abelard explicates condition *R* in terms of containment and in particular of the containment of *understanding in understanding* or of *sense in sense*. In *De intellectibus*, however, he notes that when we speak of the sense of a word we are using “sense” to mean “understanding” (*TI* 3; cf. also *Dial.* 582.16–20). To understand the appeal to sense as understanding in the formulation of condition *R* we must refer to his theory of meaning.

The basic units of meaning for Abelard are proper and general names. Finite forms of verbs are general names, which in addition to naming, serve to indicate time and propositional combination. Names acquire their meanings in acts of baptism, or imposition, in which an “impositor” introduces names with injunctions of the form “let this be named *P*,” indicating the individual to be so named, or of the form “let items of the same kind as this, or these, be named *N*” (e.g. *LI De in.* 3.10.84, G 460.27–35), indicating a representative, or representatives, of the kind.<sup>54</sup> When a name acquires its reference either to a single individual or to all the individuals of a kind, it also acquires its sense. For with imposition a causal association is established between the utterance of a name and the occurrence of

acts of understanding (*intellectus*) in the minds of the impositor and his audience.

Abelard maintains that general names signify understandings – that is, acts of intellectual attention (*attentiones*), which are actualizations of the power of rational discernment possessed by humans. In the *Logica “ingredientibus”* he maintains that these acts of understanding are directed at suitable images constructed by the mind (*LI De in.* 3.01.78, G 322.12–14);<sup>55</sup> but in the *De intellectibus* the role, if any, played by image in understanding is much less clear. In both works, however, Abelard argues that an utterance of the word, *homo*, in the presence of a Latin speaker who understands it causes him to think about what it is that makes a human to be a human by directing his attention at only these features. As Abelard puts it: someone who understands *homo* understands mortal, rational, animal.<sup>56</sup> That is, on hearing the term *homo* he directs his intellectual attention at human nature.

The understanding of “human” is simple in that it is not constructed from temporally distinct acts of understanding but nevertheless includes, or contains, as its parts the understandings of animal, rational, and mortal. To understand the expression “mortal, rational, animal” on the other hand three successive acts of intellectual attention are required.<sup>57</sup>

For Abelard, then, one cannot understand “human” without understanding mortal, rational, and animal. It is impossible intellectually to separate any of the latter features from a human being and in this sense being human requires being mortal, rational, and animal. Just the same account holds for proper names. However, the only features of Socrates which cannot be separated from him with the understanding are all and only those required for him to be human. The sense of the proper name “Socrates” is thus just that of the definite description “this human” (*LI Isag.* 49.12–26)<sup>58</sup> and so the conditional “if something is Socrates, then it is human” is true. Humans are essentially mortal, rational, animals and Socrates is essentially human. The satisfaction of condition *R* is a consequence of Abelard’s semantics for names and his essentialism.

The signification of a conditional proposition as a whole is produced, according to Abelard, by a series of acts of understanding. Acts of conjoining in the case of affirmation, and acts of disjoining in the case of separative negation, produce understandings of the



antecedent and consequent from the understandings of their subject and predicate terms. A further intellectual act associated with the conditional sign “*si*” produces the understanding signified by the complete proposition.<sup>59</sup> This is, of course, only a part of theory of the meaning of propositions and the rest has to be supplied with accounts of truth-conditions and of force (*LI De in.* 3.04.12ff., G 365.13ff.).

The conditional “if Socrates is a pearl, then Socrates is a stone” – a conditional which satisfies condition *R* because a pearl is a kind of stone – uttered assertively will be true just in case if things are as the antecedent says they are, then they are required to be as the consequent says they are. The necessary connection which must hold for the truth of a conditional is, Abelard argues, not a relationship between the words spoken in uttering the antecedent and consequent, nor one between the occurrences of the understandings that they signify, but rather a relationship between the states-of-affairs which, if uttered assertively, they indicate to be so – a relationship, that is, between what Abelard sometimes calls the *dicta* of the corresponding propositions.<sup>60</sup> This connection holds, he insists, independently of the existence of the conventions of imposition and independently of the existence of individuals of the kinds in questions. Even the creator is bound by entailment.

Abelard maintains that to understand a general kind term is to understand the nature of that kind (cf. esp. *TI* 94). He acknowledges, however, both that the differentiae of a species may not be directly accessible to sense and that the original impositor may have no notion of the nature of the thing for which he introduces a name. What is important are his intentions:

Each name of every existing thing insofar as it can generates an understanding rather than an opinion, because their inventor intended to impose them in accordance with some natures or properties of things, even if he did not properly know how to think out the nature or property. (*LI Isag.* 23.20–24; Spade 1994, 116)<sup>61</sup>

This suggests that original imposition fixes the reference of a general term as all and only the individuals of a kind, but that initially at least the associated mental actions may amount to no more than confused conceptions of the surface features of the kind. Abelard calls such confused conception “imagination” and notes that it marks the beginning of understanding (*LI De in.* 3.01.44, G 317.8–21). He

barely hints at it, but his theory of understanding thus seems to allow progression from a pre-scientific acquaintance with its immediately sensible properties to a full understanding of a natural kind. Although he does not say so, Abelard could it seems maintain that the signification of a general term is fixed as an act of understanding but changes as the understanding comes more and more to discern the nature of the kind.<sup>62</sup>

The work required to establish the truth or falsity of conditionals is, as Abelard points out, just the work required to establish the meaning of general kind terms and this he claims is a cooperative enterprise involving both the dialectician and the natural scientist (*Dial.* 286–287). Abelard appeals to the method of division to obtain definitions (*Dial.* 591.5–8), but he tells us nothing about the procedures employed by natural scientists in investigating the “properties of things” (*Dial.* 286.30–287.5). The problem is, as he points out, that the dialectician has to distinguish between conditionals such as “if something is human, then it is able to laugh,” “if something is human, then it is not an ass,” and “if something is human, then it rational.”<sup>63</sup> The first two are false and the third is true but in each case the consequent follows from the antecedent with condition *N* necessity and so no physical investigation can distinguish between them.<sup>64</sup> In practice Abelard proceeds by producing arguments to show that a given maximal proposition does not yield conditionals satisfying condition *R*, so let us turn now to some of these.

## II.6 Some embarrassing consequences

II.6.1 THE LOCUS FROM DEFINITION Redefining the classical terms once again, Abelard divides *loci* into *intrinsic* which according to him have to do with inherence, *extrinsic* which have to do with various kinds of difference, and *mediate* which involve both relationships. Among the *intrinsic loci* there is a distinction between those having to do with substances considered in themselves and those having to do with features which “follow substance.”<sup>65</sup>

The *loci* from substance concern the various forms of definition (*Dial.* 331.7–11) and there are eight candidate maximal propositions connecting definition and defined term which might yield true conditionals. There are four with both antecedent and consequent affirmative, with the definition either in the antecedent or consequent

and as either subject or predicate. And there are four more which are the contrapositives of these.

Abelard argues that for definition in the strictest sense, by genus and differentiae, only four of the rules guarantee that condition *R* is satisfied. These are the rules “of whatever the defined term holds the definition holds,” and “whatever holds of the defined term holds of the definition” and their contrapositives. He proves that the remaining maximal propositions do not satisfy condition *R* both directly and by showing that embarrassments would follow if they were accepted. In doing so he reveals a little more about his theory of definition and its role in his philosophical semantics.

The rule that “of whatever the definition is predicated the defined term is predicated” has as an instance “if Socrates is a mortal rational animal, then Socrates is human.” This conditional is false, according to Abelard, since rationality and mortality are not alone sufficient to constitute a human being from the genus animal. Rather, every substantial form of a human is required, since “there is no superfluity in nature,” and there are, according to Abelard, many such forms. Bipedality,<sup>66</sup> for example, and the ability to walk, and many others for which we have no names (*Dial.* 332.11–13)!

The indirect argument to embarrassment appeals to the same fact about the nature of humans but relies on the logic of the syncategorematic term “only” (*tantum*) which will be of much interest to later logicians but of which Abelard, again, provides the earliest published treatment. His argument is absolutely typical of hundreds that fill twelfth-century logic texts. If the conditional warranted by the locus from definition as predicate were true, we could argue that if something is a human if it is an animal informed with rationality and mortality, then it is human if it is an animal informed *only* with rationality and mortality. But then it would follow, by the *locus from definition*, that if it is an animal informed only with rationality and mortality, it is informed with bipedality – which is false. The last conditional holds because “all the substantial forms of a human being are understood in the name ‘human’” (*Dial.* 332.26–27).

Abelard agrees that “human being” and “mortal rational animal” are cointensive, that is to say equivalent with condition *N* necessity. His embarrassing argument with “only” shows that substitution of condition *N* equivalents into contexts which it governs is not truth-preserving. Condition *R* equivalence, on the other hand, preserves

truth for substitutions into opaque contexts. In the modern jargon, its logic is hyperintensional since it distinguishes between concepts whose extensions coincide in all possible worlds:

The defined word and the definition name (*notant*) just the same thing; "human" and "mortal rational animal" are imposed on the same thing and said of the same thing; but they do not indicate the same thing under the same guise. For in "human" all the differentiae are bound to be understood; in the definition only two are apposed. (*Dial.* 334.25–39)

II.6.2 THE *LOCUS FROM AN INTEGRAL WHOLE* Abelard is famous for the confrontations which punctuated his life, such as that with William of Champeaux over universals and that with Bernard of Clairvaux over theology. Less well known but, I think, much more important for the long-term development of philosophy is his confrontation with Alberic of Paris in the 1130s over the principles of inference. Their dispute about the *locus from opposites* was crucial for the history of logic, but Abelard and Alberic also disagreed interestingly over the *locus from a universal whole*.

Abelard calls such wholes "general wholes" in the *Dialectica* and maintains that the maximal propositions that "from whatever the genus is removed the species is removed" and that "whatever does not hold of the genus does not hold of the species" satisfy condition *R*. During Abelard's last stay in Paris the second of these became the object of controversy in the more general form "whatever is removed from a universal whole universally, is removed from each part." The rule seems to support the conditional "if no body is made by Socrates, then no knife is made by Socrates." In his discussion of the *locus from efficient cause* in the *Dialectica*, however, Abelard insists on the difference between creation, which is the work of God alone, and the activities of human beings, which involve combining into accidental unities what has already been created; humans make knives but only God can make a body (*Dial.* 417.23–28).

Abelard's response to the apparently embarrassing conditional is reported in two treatises written by a follower, or followers, of Alberic.<sup>67</sup> We are told that he maintained that the conditional is false and argued, again in a way that anticipated later developments, that the meaning of the subject term affects that of the predicate and that conditional must be expounded as "if no body is made to be a body by Socrates, then no knife is made to be a knife by

Socrates" – which is false but not an instance of the maximal proposition which Abelard accepts.<sup>68</sup>

To Alberic's response that Socrates today combined bone and iron to make a knife and so a body which did not exist yesterday Abelard is reported to have replied that:

he [Abelard] and the Queen of France were one body and likewise he and the Appenine mountains because he did not wish to concede that this body did not exist yesterday. Indeed he said that the horn which is on the head of a cow and the iron from which there will be a knife, are already one body before they are conjoined, and likewise himself and the Queen of France. (*Introductiones Montanae maiores* 69ra)<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately no such flippant answer was available to the most important of Alberic's objections.

II.6.3 THE LOCUS FROM OPPOSITES Abelard argues that eight principles govern the propositional relationship of antecedence and consequence expressed in a true conditional (*Dial.* 288.23–34). The first two are familiar, *modus ponens*, " $p \rightarrow q, p \models q$ " and *modus tollens*, " $p \rightarrow q, \neg q \models \neg p$ ". The *reductio* proof of *modus tollens* shows at the same time that if a conditional is true, then its contrapositive is true. We can prove that a conditional satisfies condition *R* if from the hypothesis that its antecedent is true and its consequent false we can derive a formal contradiction using only inferences which satisfy condition *R* (*Dial.* 289.3–23). That is, if we can derive both " $q$ " and "not  $q$ " for some " $q$ ". The derivation of an impossibility which is not a formal contradiction will not do since this would show only that the antecedent in question is inseparable from the consequent with condition *N* necessity.

The remaining six principles exclude all other inferences from a true conditional and the negation or affirmation of either its antecedent or its consequent to the affirmation or negation of the other. They thus exclude the inference from a conditional of anything apart from its contrapositive. Two of these principles stand at the center of Abelard's logic and provide, as it were, the rules of proof corresponding to the semantics of containment. The first of them is Abelard's version of Aristotle's Principle, noted above, that the same cannot follow both from something and its opposite. Abelard's version is propositional and properly represented as:

“not  $\{(p \rightarrow q) \& (\neg p \rightarrow q)\}$ ” (*ArI*). What we may call Abelard’s first principle may be represented as “not  $\{(p \rightarrow q) \& (p \rightarrow \neg q)\}$ ” (*AbI*). Their proofs are by *reductio*:<sup>70</sup>

( <i>ArI</i> )	( <i>AbI</i> )
(1) $p \rightarrow q$ Hypothesis	(1*) $p \rightarrow q$ Hypothesis
(2) $\neg p \rightarrow q$ Hypothesis	(2*) $p \rightarrow \neg q$ Hypothesis
(3) $\neg q \rightarrow \neg p$ 1, Modus Tollens	(3*) $\neg q \rightarrow \neg p$ 1, Modus Tollens
(4) $\neg q \rightarrow q$ 3, 2, Transitivity	(4*) $p \rightarrow \neg p$ 3, 2, Transitivity

(4) and (4\*) cannot possibly be true since:

no one doubts them to be embarrassing, or inconsistent, because the truth of one of a pair of dividing propositions not only does not require the truth of the other but rather entirely expels and extinguishes it. (*Dial.* 290.25–27)

That is, “not  $(\neg p \rightarrow p)$ ” (*Ar2*) and “not  $(p \rightarrow \neg p)$ ” (*Ab2*).

The principles (*ArI*), (*Ar2*), (*AbI*), and (*Ab2*) to which Abelard commits himself here have become known as connexive principles. The associated intuition regarding negation is sometimes called the deletion, or cancellation, theory.<sup>71</sup> According to it, the negation of a proposition cancels its content. The conjunction of a proposition with its negation has no content at all and so nothing follows from it if following requires containment.

Abelard appeals to the connexive principle (*Ab2*) in his argument to show that the *locus from opposites* does not warrant true conditionals. The maximal proposition at issue is that “of whatever one opposite is asserted the other is removed” (*Dial.* 394.4–19). Applied to the disparate opposites human and stone this yields “if Socrates is a human, then Socrates is not a stone.” Abelard argues against it with what I call the *Embarrassing Argument from Opposites* (*EO*):<sup>72</sup>

- (*EO1*) If Socrates is a human and a stone, then Socrates is a stone.
- (*EO2*) If Socrates is a human and a stone, then Socrates is a human.
- (*EO3*) If Socrates is a human, then Socrates is not a stone.
- (*EO4*) If Socrates is not a stone, then Socrates is not (a human and a stone); so
- (*EO5*) If Socrates is a human and a stone, then Socrates is not (a human and a stone).

(*EO1*) and (*EO2*) are applications of the principle of conditional simplification which, as we saw above, Abelard accepts and indeed

seems to be a paradigm for an inference warranted by the containment of the consequent in the antecedent. (EO3) is the conditional whose truth is at issue. (EO4) follows from (EO1) by contraposition and (EO5) follows from (EO2), (EO3), and (EO4) by transitivity.

The argument shows, Abelard holds, that no conditional of the form " $p \rightarrow \neg q$ " can be true and, with (EI), that no conditional of mixed quality can be true. We can see now why Abelard cannot accept the double negation equivalence " $p \leftrightarrow \neg\neg p$ "

(1) $p \rightarrow \neg\neg p$	Hypothesis
(2) $(p \ \& \ \neg p) \rightarrow \neg p$	Simplification
(3) $(p \ \& \ \neg p) \rightarrow p$	Simplification
(4) $(p \ \& \ \neg p) \rightarrow \neg\neg p$	3, 1, Transitivity
(5) $\neg\neg p \rightarrow \neg(p \ \& \ \neg p)$	2, Contraposition
(6) $(p \ \& \ \neg p) \rightarrow \neg(p \ \& \ \neg p)$	4, 5, Transitivity

and likewise for the other conditional.

Since, according to Abelard, there are no negative substantial forms, the definition of a natural kind cannot contain a negative term and so Abelardian connexive logic allows one to make inferences from impossible hypotheses such as that Socrates is Brown, an ass, or that a man is an ass, without risk of arriving at a formal contradiction. In the decades after Abelard's death this kind of inference was formalized in the procedure known as the *obligatio* of impossible *positio* and put to use in theology.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately Abelard's various intuitions about the propositional connectives cannot be reconciled. The deletion account of negation is not compatible with simplification; hence modern connexive logics thus give up at least the conditional version.<sup>74</sup> More generally connexive logic is non-monotonic but, as we saw above, Abelard accepts monotonicity.

It was Alberic of Paris who first noticed the problem and produced against Abelard the most embarrassing of all twelfth-century arguments. Abelard accepts as a paradigm of true conditionals "if something is human, then it is an animal." But as reported, for example, in *Introductiones Montanae minores* (65–66), Alberic argued by simplification that:

- (1) If Socrates is human and Socrates is not an animal, then Socrates is not an animal, and by contraposition that

- (2) if Socrates is not an animal, then Socrates is not human. But by simplification and contraposition, it follows that
- (3) if Socrates is not human then it is not the case that Socrates is human and Socrates is not an animal, and so by transitivity that
- (4) if Socrates is human and Socrates is not an animal, then it is not the case that Socrates is human and Socrates is not an animal.

But this is in contravention of (*Ab*<sub>2</sub>).

One source tells us that this argument was too much for Abelard and that he simply accepted the conclusion.<sup>75</sup> Though he was an old man nearing the end of his eventful life, this seems quite out of character and another source indicates that he did see what might have been a way out and suggested that the principle of simplification needs to be qualified.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately he seems never to have developed this suggestion and, although his followers, the Nominales, remained faithful to the principles of Abelardian connexivism, Alberic's argument provoked a crisis in the history of logic that was finally resolved with the general acceptance of condition *N* as providing both the truth conditions for conditional propositions and definition of validity.<sup>77</sup> A place remained for condition *R*, however, since in answering certain philosophical and theological questions, hypotheses acknowledged to be impossible had to be made. In reasoning about such a hypothesis the principle that anything follows from an impossibility, which was recognized explicitly as characteristic of the logic of condition *N* in the 1150s,<sup>78</sup> had to be suspended. In such cases only inferences satisfying condition *R* were permitted.<sup>79</sup> Philosophers continued for the next one hundred and fifty years to work with logical tools developed by Abelard though certainly without realizing that they were doing so. It was only at the beginning of the fourteenth century that logicians appeared whose work could compare with Abelard's and who were able to rethink the theory of entailment.

#### NOTES

1. Abelard observes that he refers to the science in question indifferently as logic (*logica*) or dialectic (*dialectica*) (*LNPS* 506ff.). Logic is the science of arguing which, together with physics and ethics, is one of the three parts of philosophy. Logic is also an instrument of philosophical research



and in particular logic is employed in answering questions about logic. Cf. *LI Isag.* 1.14–25.

2. Limitations of space also prevent me covering other topics in logic to which Abelard makes an outstanding contribution, in particular his theory of modality and the modal syllogism and his treatment of the logic of future contingents. For a discussion of the first, see Martin 2001.
3. The most significant of which is the *Dialectica* of Garlandus, a radically nominalist treatment of logic roughly contemporary with Abelard's own *Dialectica*. Cf. de Rijk 1959.
4. *Propositio* in Boethius and Abelard means a propositional token.
5. In his *LI Top.* 243.7–16, Abelard argues that this proposition is not in fact maximal since it does not contain a *locus differentia*.
6. Cf. *De top. diff.* 2.1185–1186A: "Universal and maximal propositions are thus called *loci* because they contain the other propositions and through them a consequent and confirmed conclusion."
7. Hypothetical syllogisms of, e.g., the form "if *A* is, *B* is, if *B* is, *C* is; therefore if *A* is, *C* is." Boethius does not have a special name for this type of syllogism but he curiously appeals to it in *De hyp. syll.* 2.9, to demonstrate the "imperfect" syllogisms of the form "*A* is, if *A* is, *B* is, if *B* is *C* is; therefore *C* is."
8. Cf. *De hyp. syll.* 1.2.4–5: "[The hypothetical premises] take the warrant for their proper consequences (*vis propriae consequentiae*) from categorical . . . syllogisms. For if there is doubt about whether the first [conditional] premise of a hypothetical syllogism is true, it will be demonstrated with a predicative conclusion." Boethius gives no hint of a proof procedure but if he knew of one it was presumably some form of conditionalization – " $p, q \models r / p \models q \rightarrow r$ ."
9. That's not to say that Boethius had a clear understanding of the distinction between thing, state-of-affairs, and fact, for all of which he uses *res*. Far from it. See the remarks on propositionality, §§ 1.2 and 11.1 below.
10. In his *LI Top.*, 228.20–24, Abelard notes that we may falsely predicate terms of lesser extension of those of greater extension and that he refers to true predications as "regular."
11. Cf. *De hyp. syll.* 1.2.2. In *De hyp. syll.*, but not in his other works, Boethius uses the schema "*si est A, est B*" where "*A*" and "*B*" are term variables.
12. The translation has to be varied accordingly.
13. The equivalence of "if *A* is, *B* is" to "if *B* is not, *A* is not." Boethius doesn't use the term "contraposition" in this sense but rather for the formation of "every non-*B* is non-*A*" from "every *A* is *B*."
14. Cf. Iwakuma and Ebbesen 1992.

15. E.g. "If something's a man, it is not a horse." Such conditionals only hold for predications of the same subject.
16. E.g. "If it is not day, it is night," "if it is not dark, it is light."
17. In his commentary on Cicero's *Topica*, Boethius claims that the discovery of an *argumentum* is simply the discovery of the middle term in a syllogism.
18. Here, as elsewhere, Boethius apparently intends a claim about a syllogism or enthymeme but uses a conditional construction. Cf. *De top. diff.* 2.1188C.
19. Cf. Martin 1991, 304.
20. According to Priscian, *Inst.* 16.2, a conditional signifies a *consequentia rerum*. Boethius, however, uses "consequence" both for the conditional and for what it signifies.
21. Boethius has nothing to say about compound disjunctions.
22. I say "implies" here because although Boethius claims that this distinction is a distinction between the use of *cum* and *si*, his examples of each kind of conditional are all formed with *cum*.
23. Though he does put them to use elsewhere. Cf. Martin 1999. In *In Cic. Top.* 1165A, he makes apparently the same distinction in terms of consequences which are substantial and those which are accidental.
24. The name is due to Stors McCall (1966) on the basis of Sextus Empiricus's remark that "those who introduce the notion of connexion say that a conditional is sound in which the contradictory of its consequent is incompatible with its antecedent." (Translated in Kneale and Kneale 1984, 129.)
25. When he is being very careful Abelard contrasts assertion with other speech acts as "proposing assertively what is true or false." *LI De in* 3.05.17, G375.29–35. Cf. *Dial.* 151–33.05.
26. According to Abelard, provided the term "*B*" standardly applies to existents, the truth of both "*A* is *B*" and "*A* is not *B*" requires the existence of *A*, if "*A*" is singular and of some *As* if it is quantified as "every *S*" or "some *S*." Propositions such as "Homer is a poet" and "a chimaera is something which can be thought about" are non-standard. A consequence of Abelard's account of negation is that while for any individual *A*, "*A* does not exist" is necessarily false, "*A* exists" is only contingently true if *A* is a creature and divides truth and falsity with "not (*A* exists)."
27. Abelard does not, it seems, explicitly make the distinction between separative and destructive negations for singular propositions. It is attributed to him, however, in the *Glossa doctrinae sermonum*, MS Paris BN lat. fol. 15015 ff.180ra01–199ra46, 187va20–188va38. Where

- Aristotle appears to claim that a separative negation is true if its subject fails to exist, Abelard must interpret him as referring to destructive negation. Cf. *LI De in.* 3.06.29, G 396.4–17.
28. Following Boethius, *In De in. maior* 7.146, Abelard reads “*nullus A*” (no A) as “*non ullus A*” and this as “not one A.”
  29. William Kneale (Kneale and Kneale 1984, 210–211) puzzles over Abelard’s claims about “No A is B” in the *Dialectica* but does not notice that the text has him identifying it with both “Every A is not B” for the truth of which it is necessary that some As exist and with “Not some A is B,” which is true if there are no As, as well as insisting that it is not equivalent to the latter! In *LI De in.* 3.07 (G 401.8–414.27), this confusion is absent. Abelard notes that some people identify “No A is B” with the separative negation “Every A is not B” but he rejects this. “No A is B” is equivalent, he insists, to the extinctive negation “Not (some A is B).”
  30. Abelard’s claim was controversial. The author of *Glossa doctrinae sermonum*, writing no earlier than the late 1130s, after fairly stating Abelard’s position, rejects the claim that copulative conjunction forms a single proposition: “Whence we do not agree with this theory but judge that Boethius is to be followed.” (MS Paris BN lat. ff. 15015 ff. 196va.)
  31. Cf. Anderson and Belnap 1975, vol. 1, §1.4, 23 and generally Routley, Meyer, Plumwood, and Brady 1983, vol. 1.
  32. Abelard sometimes also uses *consecutio* and *inferentia* to mean a true conditional.
  33. That is, the conditional proposition whose antecedent is the conjoined premises and whose consequent is the conclusion.
  34. Abelard apparently quotes from the *Prior Analytics* on two other occasions to give Aristotle’s definition of perfection – discussed below – and to note that he speaks of “inherence” where Abelard and his contemporaries refer to “predication” (cf. *Dial.* 239.20–27).
  35. Cf. *Dial.* 232.6–8, referring to *Prior Analytic* 1.1, 24b21: “I mean by ‘from their being so’ to fall out through them; and by ‘to fall out through them’, that nothing extrinsic to the terms is required for this to come about necessarily.”
  36. Abelard’s example has “if every human is a stone and every stone is a wood, then every human is a wood” obtained from “if every human is an animal and every animal is animate, then every human is animate.”
  37. Proust 1989, ch. 3.
  38. The examples given here, as often in the *Dialectica*, seem to have become corrupted but the rejection of repetition is explicit and repeated.

39. Abelard allows as canonical, however, figures mentioned by neither Aristotle nor Boethius. For example: "Some *A* is *B* and the same *B* is *C*; therefore some *B* is *C*" has a *complexio syllogismi* (*Dial.* 320.27–321.11). Abelard also has syllogisms which mix non-modal and modal categoricals, syllogisms with tensed propositions, and syllogisms which mixed general and singular categoricals.
40. Later twelfth-century writers follow Abelard, *LNPS* 508.9–15, in distinguishing between complexional and local arguments.
41. Cf. Iwakuma and Ebbesen 1992.
42. Since (1)  $p \models p$  (reflexivity), (2)  $p, q \models p$  (1, monotonicity), etc.
43. See *Dial.* 260.28–33: "Two propositions taken together are antecedent to each one of them."
44. One of the differences between the *Dialectica* and the *Gloss on the Topics* is that in the latter Abelard asserts that maximal propositions are categoricals. Cf. *LI Top.* 239.1–8.
45. Probably referring to William of Champeaux, Abelard notes that his own Master held this view.
46. Cf. *Dial.* 403.12–18; Abelard did not have the apparatus of parentheses to indicate scope.
47. In the qualified conditional connecting immediates the generalization over time includes the whole conditional in its scope.
48. That is a conditional whose antecedent and consequent contain no propositional connectives – separative negation is not a propositional connective.
49. Cf. Routley, Meyer, Plumwood, and Brady 1983.
50. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* III.6: "I am amazed that the Peripatetic of Pallet so narrowly laid down the law for hypotheticals that he judged only those to be accepted the consequent of which is included in the antecedent . . . indeed while he freely accepted *argumenta*, he rejected hypotheticals unless forced by the most manifest necessity." See Martin 1987b.
51. Apparently Abelard would have held that albino birds aren't crows. Cf. *LI Cat.* 128, where Abelard says "we know all crows are black."
52. Cf. *LI Isag.* 91.11–16: "Granted that in a certain way a human being cannot exist without the ability to laugh, because, that is, it cannot come about that there is a human being who is not able to laugh. In another way it can come about, as Porphyry holds that a human being may be without a property, that is, understood negatively as follows: the property is not required by being human."
53. We first hear of the principle and of a proof by William of Soissons in the *Metalogicon* of John of Salisbury, written in 1159. See Martin 1986.

54. Adam was the original impositor. Cf. *Hex.* 127, on Genesis 2:19, where Abelard describes Adam as "first inspecting the natures of things, which he would afterwards provide words to designate."
55. Abelard holds that when the named thing is present intellectual attention is directed at it rather than at an image, but it is not clear to me that he intends to claim this for general names and indefinite descriptions as well as for proper names and definite descriptions. Cf. chapter 6.
56. Cf. *TI* 39: "Someone who hears the name 'animal' attends simultaneously to these three: body and animation and sensibility, as conjoined in the substance of animal."
57. Cf. *TI* 33–35, esp. 34: "For the name 'human' simultaneously determines the matter, animal, rationality, and mortality, and all are understood at once in the name and not by succession. And perhaps there are several simultaneous actions in one understanding of a simple significant word, following upon the soul's conceiving several things, so that there is one action for each thing it deliberates upon."
58. Cf. also *Dial.* 332.32–333.15: "it follows from the imposition of 'Socrates' that he is a mortal, rational, animal."
59. Cf. *LI De in.* 3.01.118, G 330.18–26: "in 'if Socrates is a pearl, then Socrates is a stone', the force of the conjunction brings an act of attention to bear on the whole consequence with a certain part of the understanding, which necessarily conjoins this with that. This attention is a third act which with the actions of the two [component] propositions composes the action of a single understanding."
60. Abelard seems never to say that one *dictum* requires or does not require another but he does speak this way about *status*. Cf. *LNPS* 561.20–28.
61. Cf. also *Dial.* 595.25–31: "Granted, moreover, that the impositor did not distinctly understand all the differentiae of human, he intended, nevertheless, that the word ['human'] to be taken for all of them as he confusedly conceived them. Or if he imposed the name ['human'] only for certain differentiae, the sense (*sententia*) should consist only of them, and in accordance with them the definition of the sense should be assigned."
62. But cf. *Dial.* 583.32–34: "many, because they know the signification of the substance of the name 'human' but do not adequately perceive from the name the [substantial] qualities, require the definition only in order to have a demonstration of the qualities."
63. Cf. *Dial.* 285.16–286.33: "When it is proposed 'if something is body, it is corporeal,' and 'if something is a body, it is colored,' although the same substance of the body which is corporeal is colored, and whatever is colored is corporeal and vice versa, so that there is in reality no

- difference (*distantia*) between a substance which is informed with color or constituted with corporeity, the first assertion is, nevertheless, true and the second false."
64. Cf. *Dial.* 284.24–49: "It is clear that the consequent is not contained in the antecedent of the consequences 'if something is human, then it is not a stone' and 'if there is paternity, then there is filiation', and that the senses of the consequents do not hold on account of the senses of the antecedents, but rather that by our discernment of the nature and cognition of the property of the nature, we are certain with the antecedent of the consequent. That is, because we know the nature of human and stone to be so disparate that they cannot exist together in the same thing at the same time."
65. Abelard tries for a principled distinction here, but classical *loci* do not fit particularly well into it. As the *loci* most useful to dialecticians, Abelard gives the following: (1) Intrinsic, (a) from substance: from definition, from description, from interpretation; (b) from what follows substance: from genus, from integral whole, from parts, from equals, from predicate or subject, from antecedent or consequent. (2) Extrinsic, from opposites: from relative things, from simultaneous things, from what is prior, from contraries, from privation and habit, from affirmation and negation. (3) Mediate: relatives (also extrinsic), integral whole and part (also intrinsic), exceeding and exceeded. Cf. *Dial.* 413.1–35.
66. On the curious problems presented by bipedality as a differentiae, see my discussion of Abelard on amputees in Martin 2001.
67. Cf. the *Introductiones Montanae minores* and the unpublished *Introductiones Montanae maiores*, Paris BN lat. 15.141, ff. 47r–104r.
68. *Introductiones Montanae minores*, 49–52; *Introductiones Montanae maiores*, 69rb–69va.
69. The *Introductiones Montanae minores* has the King of France rather than the Queen!
70. Cf. *Dial.* 290–292, which makes explicit all the steps in the argument. The text of the *Dialectica* is rather corrupt at this point.
71. Cf. Routley, Meyer, Plumwood, and Brady 1983, 2.4.
72. Cf. esp. *Dial.* 395.6–35. I have reconstructed the full argument with the help of *Introductiones Montanae minores*, 63–64.
73. Cf. Martin 1992a and Martin 1998.
74. Cf. Routley, Meyer, Plumwood, and Brady 1983, 2.4.
75. In the commentary on *De hyp. syll.* in MS Berlin lat. f. 624, quoted in de Rijk 1966, 57.
76. *Introductiones Montanae minores*, 66. "They said that 'if Socrates is human and Socrates is not an animal, then Socrates is not an animal'

does not hold because a negation is not so powerful (*vehemens*) when joined with an affirmation as it is when it is alone, and something follows from a negation alone which does not follow from it when it is conjoined with an affirmation."

77. Cf. Martin 1987a.

78. Cf. Martin 1986.

79. Cf. Martin 2000.

## 6 Mind and cognition

Much of Abelard's philosophy, specifically his philosophy of language, rests on an account of cognition and philosophy of mind. Abelard recognized this dependence. His more famous discussions of universals and propositions each include a brief treatment of cognition and mind as essential groundwork. Around 1125 he wrote the *Treatise on Understandings* (*Tractatus de intellectibus*) to present his views in a single work and in a more coherent fashion than he had hitherto undertaken to do. The *Treatise's* stated purpose is to distinguish and explain the operations of the mind "necessary for the doctrine of *sermones*" (TI 1), and it reflects Abelard's somewhat ambivalent feelings about the philosophical importance of issues in cognition and philosophy of mind. The issues are important enough to warrant discussion in an independent work, but Abelard did not consider their study to be a philosophical end in itself.

That Abelard saw his account of cognition and philosophy of mind as ancillary to his discussion of other philosophical problems neither lessens the need to study his account of mind nor diminishes the importance of his contributions. Abelard's views are a unique contribution to the philosophical discussion of the mind, and quite important for any understanding of Abelard's philosophy.

In addition to the *Treatise on Understandings*, Abelard's more significant discussions of cognition and mind are embedded in discussions of universals and propositions. These are found in the *Ingredientibus* commentary on Porphyry (*LI Isag.* 18–27, 95–96; Spade 1994, 76–142), the *Ingredientibus* commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione* (*LI De in.* 3.01.111–127, G 312–331), and the *Nostrorum* (*LNPS* 524–53). There are also numerous other passages scattered throughout his works in which he reiterates points



contained in these main passages sometimes adding detail or clarity. Neither the *Treatise* nor any of these other passages contain all the elements of Abelard's account. Hence, Abelard's views must be reconstructed from these disparate parts.

In this chapter I provide a systematic introduction to the central elements of Abelard's account of cognition and philosophy of mind. I begin with a brief assessment of Abelard's place in the Aristotelian tradition (§I). Following this, I discuss Abelard's account of sensation, imagination, and understanding (§II); it is in this section that I develop Abelard's account of cognition. I turn next to a discussion of abstraction and universal understandings (§III). Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion of opinion, knowledge, and intelligence – the epistemic issues involved in Abelard's account of mind (§IV).

## I. ABELARD AND ARISTOTLE

Abelard's philosophy of mind has its foundation in what Abelard knew of Aristotle. Abelard repeats several stock Aristotelian claims but usually with little detail; e.g. he describes the soul as having the standard vegetative, sensitive, and rational powers, but he does very little to describe and differentiate these powers (*IP De div.* 194; *LI De in.* 3.01.17, G 312.37; *Dial.* 555.20; *LNPS* 549.4). When attempting to fit Abelard into the Aristotelian tradition it should not be overlooked that Abelard's knowledge of Aristotle was thin. Abelard knew of the *De anima* but had not read it, and he knew the *De interpretatione* through Boethius's somewhat suspect translations and commentaries. So although the foundation of Abelard's account of cognition is Aristotelian, the edifice built on that foundation differs from Aristotle's and from that of later Aristotelians.<sup>1</sup> Abelard's theories do not fit well into the framework of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century commentators on Aristotle. His descriptions of cognition do not fall into the classifications of sensory, intellectual, intuitive, abstractive, evident, etc. A reader looking for a detailed exposition of the powers of the intellect, or rational soul, will not find it in Abelard.

There are two accounts of cognition traditionally derived from Aristotle, and Abelard's differs significantly from both. From the *De anima* is derived an account of cognition in which the mind somehow takes on the form of the thing known. Abelard rejects this

account as nonsense. He argues that the mind does not become four-sided upon having an understanding of a four-sided tower, and the mind can understand contraries at the same time (cf. *LI Isag.* 20.29; *LI De in.* 3.01.28, 30, G 314.34, 315.5; Spade 1994, 97). Given Abelard's views about what it means to take on a form the mind simply cannot take on the form of the understood item. Abelard has no account of the reception of intelligible, or sensible, forms. He knew little of the *De anima*, and that only second hand. His rejection of the formal identity holding between the mind and an extramental item begins to show the extent to which Abelard's views will differ from those of later Aristotelians.

From the *De interpretatione* one can derive a second theory, that the mind forms representations called "passions of the mind" or "likenesses of things" by Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> For similar reasons Abelard rejects this account also. The mind does not become like the item understood (*LI De in.* 3.01.33, G 315.11). Abelard also adds that no likeness or image is needed when the object itself is present and sensed, thus the understanding cannot be a likeness (*LI De in.* 3.01.34, G 315.15). Although representative images will play an important role in the process of cognition, cognition is not simply the formation of representations.

In fairness to Aristotle there are many distinctions in the *De interpretatione* between sensory images, representative imaginations, and the intellectual cognitions he calls "similitudes" or "passions of the mind." However, Abelard is working with Boethius's translations and commentaries, and Boethius tends to call everything in the mind a "passion of the mind," and so blurs these distinctions. Abelard recognized the philosophical problems in Boethius's presentation of Aristotle, but was left to his own devices to solve them. He describes several distinct mental processes keeping acts of understanding distinct from images and other passions of the mind (*LI De in.* 3.01.92, 60, G 325.10, 319.12). Abelard allows that understandings may be called "likenesses of things," only in the very qualified sense that things are the intentional objects of acts of understanding (*LI Isag.* 21.6; Spade 1994, 98). The result is a view that takes its start from Aristotle but is developed uniquely. Abelard's preferred account emphasizes the intentionality of acts of understandings while rejecting the notions that understandings are formally identical with, or representative likenesses of, the item understood.

## II. SENSE, IMAGINATION, AND UNDERSTANDING

Abelard's account of the cognitive process lies in his explanation of how reason works with sense and imagination to have acts of understanding. The details occupy the larger part of this chapter, but even the general framework of the account is a bit peculiar. Through the powers of sensation and imagination the mind has an initial confused conception of a particular discrete item.<sup>3</sup> Present sensible items are sensed, absent or insensible items are imagined. The confused conception is the mind's initial awareness of the item. The mind's attention is focused either on the item directly sensed or on the formation of the image. It is called "confused" because the mind is merely conscious of the item. In this initial confused conception the mind does not yet understand the nature or properties of the item. In the confused conception produced by sensation the mind is directly aware of an extramental, present, sensible item. In the confused conceptions of imagination, the mind imagines what would be sensed if the item were present and sensible. Through the exercise of reason, the initial conscious awareness of the item becomes an increasingly clear understanding of the nature and properties of the item. Abelard describes the process as "supervening" reason perfecting the confused conception of sensation or imagination (*LI De in.* 3.01.44, G 317.11). The result of the process of cognition is an act of understanding whereby the mind discerns some nature or property of a sensed or imagined item.

All cognition starts with sensation and sensation is the only source of information. "Any human notion arises from the senses" (*TI* 77; cf. also *LI De in.* 3.01.122, G 331.3). This dependence on sensation is quite limiting. "The feeble human mind starts with sense and is hardly ever able to progress beyond sense" (*TI* 2). Abelard is not being hyperbolic in calling the human mind "feeble." Reason is hardly able to form understandings of any item that is not accessible to sense. And the only items we sense are the sensible accidents of concrete particulars (*LI Isag.* 95.20). The dependence on sensation, and the limited scope of what is sensible place serious limitations on human cognitive abilities. These limitations set the parameters for Abelard's discussion of cognition.

Sensation itself is described only briefly. Sensation is a power by which the mind has direct access to sensible items in the extramental

world. Although an act of sensation is a mental activity, there is as yet no rational activity. Thus, when the mind, via a sense organ, peers out at some item in the world, it does not attend to or discern any nature or property of the item (*LI De in.* 3.01.19, G 313.8; *TI* 4). Sensation provides the mind's initial awareness of an item.

Abelard makes several standard claims when describing sensation. Sensation is *of* bodies. It is exercised *through* a bodily organ without which it cannot be had at all (*LI De in.* 3.01.19, G 313.4; *LI Isag.* 20.21, Spade 1994, 95; *TI* 4). Sensation requires a body, and only bodies (physical objects) are sensed. Even so, Abelard claims that sensation is a mental power: "an application of the mind directed at corporeal things" (*TI* 4). Sensation is not a physical power of an animate body. Abelard's account of sensation, however brief, is in this respect more Augustinian than Aristotelian.

Still, some claims that one might expect from someone following the Aristotelian or the Augustinian tradition are absent. There is no division of internal and external senses. In fact there is no discussion at all of the functions usually assigned, by Augustine or Aristotle, to internal senses. I suspect that Abelard thought that the work usually ascribed to the internal senses, or at least to the common sense, would be subsumed under his explanation of the power of supervening reason to form understandings out of the confused conceptions of sensation.

There is also no discussion of sense images, nor any discussion of the external senses (sight, hearing, etc.) receiving and then presenting information in some manner to the rational part of the mind. Abelard did not view the external senses as the means by which information is presented to the mind. He viewed the power of sensation as a mental power by which the mind peered directly out at the world, as if "through a window" (*LI De in.* 3.01.19, G 313.7). Because the mind's eye is looking directly out onto the world there is no need for sense images to be received. "Sense perception is of the item itself, not a likeness of the item" (*LI De In.* 3.01.24, 77, G 314.3, 322.12). The confused conception of sense is the direct awareness of the extramental item. Reason forms acts of understanding by focusing directly on the extramental item sensed.

Like the power of sensation, the power of imagination is a mental power producing a confused conception. The difference is that the confused conception produced by the imagination is a representation

of an item that is either not present, and so cannot be sensed, or is insensible. In using the power of imagination the mind is aware of an item and begins to focus its attention on the item by forming a representation of that item. Imagination primarily functions as a storehouse for what has been sensed.<sup>4</sup> Were the item present and sensible, the mind would focus directly on the item. When the item is not present and sensible a mental image represents the item (*LI De in.* 3.01.34, G 315.5; *TI* 14). Imagination is also productive; the mind can form images of items which have not been sensed. At its simplest this productive power is the power by which I can form a mental image of Rome, although I have never in fact been there. Rome is sensible, but for me unsensed. At its more interesting the productive power allows the mind to form mental images of items that cannot be sensed – of immaterial objects, and perhaps of universals (*LI De in.* 3.01.24, G 313.33; *LI Isag.* 22.7; Spade 1994, 106 *TI* 17). When imagination produces an image the mind can focus its attention and use the power of reason to have an act of understanding the absent or insensible item imagined.

In exercising the imagination's productive power we are constrained to imagine all items, unsensed and insensible, *as if* they were subject to sensation. In the case of images of sensible but unsensed items, for example, Rome, this is not problematic. I imagine Rome to be like other cities I have sensed. By contrast, the image associated with insensible items is problematic. We are constrained to imagine insensible items as if they were subject to sense, even though they are not. This is one of the manifestations of our dependence on sensation, and a limitation we almost never transcend (at least without the help of God). "We are so bound to the agreement of the senses that we can never, or hardly ever, understand something which we do not imagine as corporeal or subject to corporeal properties" (*TI* 20). All images, even those of insensible items, are iconically representative of the sensible world (*TI* 19). These imagined items are not imaginary. Insensible items are real, and reason is able to form acts of understanding insensible items by focusing on a necessarily inaccurate image. Abelard was rightly troubled by the problems this view presents. His attempted solutions are a main subject of this chapter.

The distinct powers of imagination and sensation sometimes combine to form the confused conceptions on which reason can focus.

Seeing a piece of wood without touching it presents only a partial conception of the wood. Imagination fills in the gaps in our immediate sensory experience by adding hardness, and other unsensed or insensible properties, to the confused mental conception (*TI* 23). We sense what is present and able to be sensed, and imagination supplies images of unsensed and insensible properties of the items we are sensing. It would be a mistake to call the entire confused conception a representation. The mind is consciously aware of an item, partially through direct sensation, partially through imagination. It may be the case that most cognition will begin with just this kind of conception – that is, with a conception that is partially representative and partially direct.

Only when the powers of sense and imagination have created a confused conception can reason act. There must be some item, either represented in a mental image or directly experienced via sensation, which is the intentional object of the rational power's discerning gaze. In using the powers of sensation and imagination the mind is aware of an item but has not yet grasped any nature or property of it. An act of understanding is the mind using its rational power to progress from merely being aware of the item to consciously discerning some nature or property of the item. Abelard describes this as reason perfecting the confused conception of sense or imagination (*LI De in.* 3.01.43, 50, G 316.31, 318.3). When the confused conception involves an image, Abelard is quite clear to point out that the item represented in the image, and not the image itself, is the object of the understanding.

An act of understanding is an intentional act of the mind's rational power. Abelard has several ways of describing this act but no settled terminology. An act of understanding is the "effect of reason," the "result of an act of reason," and an "act itself" (*TI* 10; *LI De in.* 3.01.22, G 313.19; *LI Isag.* 20.30; Spade 1994, 96). An act of understanding is the "mind's very thought" (*TI* 5). In acting, reason produces an understanding but when reason stops acting nothing remains. What is clear in Abelard's attempted descriptions is that an act of understanding is a transitory act of consciously thinking about an item.<sup>5</sup>

When describing acts of understanding Abelard consistently chooses to emphasize their intentionality. The words Abelard uses most often to describe these acts are *attendere* and *discernere*. In

an act of understanding we attend to or discern a nature or property of some particular item. Even universal understandings have discrete particulars as their intentional objects. Abelard has argued that an act of understanding is neither formally identical with, nor a representative likeness, of the item understood. Instead, an act of understanding is the very act of thinking about – consciously attending to or discerning – a nature or property of a sensed or imagined item.<sup>6</sup>

Abelard's account of the cognition of particular sensible items is fairly simple. With Socrates present in front of us there is direct access, via sensation, to Socrates and whatever sensible accidents Socrates may have. Through sensation we have a direct but confused conception of him. The rational power then focuses on some aspect of Socrates, conceived confusedly through sense, and has an act of understanding him, or his whiteness, or his snub-nosedness, etc. With Socrates absent we simply imagine what we had sensed. In either case reason focuses its discerning gaze on the item, perfecting the initial confused conception of sense and imagination. The effect is an act of understanding in which we think about Socrates or some nature or property of Socrates.

In Abelard's account of the cognition of universals or insensibles more complicated issues arise. As with any act of understanding reason must focus on a confused conception, but neither universals nor insensibles can be sensed. To have an act of understanding a universal or an insensible the mind must form an image, an image in which we are constrained to imagine the item as sensible (*TI* 17–18, 75; *LI De in.* 3.01.24, G 313.34).<sup>7</sup>

There is obviously an epistemic problem caused by the inaccuracy of the image. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Presently Abelard must explain how it is possible to form the images of insensibles and universals in the first place, and then explain how reason understands the items "represented" in these images. He offers, I think, two distinct explanations; one is suited to the problem of universal understandings, the other to understandings of insensibles. One claim is central to both: the image is nothing.

That the image is nothing is an odd claim, but one Abelard repeats (*LI De in.* 3.01.27, 35, G 314.27, 315.10), adding that images are "not true existences" (*LI De in.* 3.01.35, G 315.18) and are "neither substance nor accident" (*LI Isag.* 20.35; Spade 1994, 96). The image is merely a depiction of the extramental object, and Abelard is not

willing to give depictions any ontological status. Abelard emphasizes this point in order to make it perfectly clear that the image is not a mentally constructed intentional object for either universal understandings or understandings of insensibles. The intentional object of the understanding is an extramental item “represented” in the image, not the image itself.

Abelard’s first explanation, the one better suited to universal understandings, is found in the *Ingredientibus* commentary on Porphyry. Here Abelard adopts a very broad notion of what it means for an image to be iconically representative (*LI Isag.* 22.12–27; Spade 1994, 107–109). When we want to think of a particular lion we form an image of that particular individual lion – in Abelard’s example, the lion limping and wounded by Hercules’s spear. The understanding is straightforwardly of what is represented in the image.<sup>8</sup> When the understanding is a universal understanding, of lionness, and not of any particular lion, we also construct an image, but of no lion in particular. It is as if we make the opposite of a police artist’s sketch, removing all distinguishing or individuating detail. The resulting image is iconically representative of the sensible world but not of any particular item in the sensible world. Likewise, the understanding pertains to each lion but no particular discrete lion is the intentional object of the act of understanding.

In both the commentary on Porphyry, where Abelard develops the wounded-lion view, and the commentary on the *De interpretatione*, where he reiterates the view, he stresses the importance of the image. Abelard calls this image a *common form* or *res ficta* (*LI Isag.* 20.31; Spade 1994, 96); he also calls such images *notae*, *simulacra*, *effigies* (*LI De in.* 3.01.25, G 314.7–11), as well as *imaginary forms* which the mind can fashion at will (*LI De in.* 3.01.24, G 313.34). Abelard quotes the authority of Priscian, Plato, and even Cicero, each describing the importance of this sort of image for our understandings of insensibles and universals (*LI De in.* 3.01.25–26, G 314.7–24; *LI Isag.* 22.28, 24.3; Spade 1994, 111, 121). In a very qualified sense the image can even be called the “subject thing” of an understanding (*LI Isag.* 22.14; Spade 1994, 107). Calling this image the common form, Abelard goes so far as to claim it is signified by universal words (*LI Isag.* 24.25; Spade 1994, 123).

Were we able to form an accurate image, the image would be a depiction of the form, or the matter and form composition, of the item



depicted. It is in this context that Abelard calls images *res fictae*, “made-up things.” Such *res fictae* would accurately represent the true metaphysical composition of extramental items (*LI Isag.* 23.32, 81.17; Spade 1994, 118; *LNPS* 568.18). This is the closest Abelard comes to adopting anything like the formal identity of thought and thing. But even here, the image is not the act of understanding and so there is no formal identity between understanding and thing. However, the mind, focusing the discerning attention of reason on an image that accurately depicts the metaphysical structure of the item, would very likely produce a veridical understanding of the nature or properties of the item represented.

On the wounded-lion view the representative quality of the image is of paramount cognitive importance. Unfortunately, our limited power of imagination precludes the formation of accurate images. Presumably we would be able to form accurate images were our imagination not so restricted by a dependence on sensation. We sense individuals as individuals; we do not sense the underlying metaphysical structure. We see Socrates; we do not see forms combined with matter. We cannot create an accurate image of just the metaphysical structure. Truly accurate *res fictae* or images are properly found only in the mind of God, because only God’s cognition is unhindered by sense (*LI Isag.* 22.28; Spade 1994, 111; *LI De in.* 3.01.26, G 314.7; *LNPS* 513.15).

The wounded-lion view does have its problems. There is reason to doubt that we can form an image that is at once iconically representative but which could not be representative of any particular item. Even if one might think we could, this account would only work for some universal understandings, those universal understandings which pertain to sensible accidents of particulars, whiteness perhaps. It will not work at all for understandings of insensibles. The process of stripping away the detail to arrive at an image that is no longer representative of a particular sensible item assumes that we start with an image of a particular sensible item. We can have no such initial image of the soul or other insensible items, natures, or properties.

Still, there are at least two things to be said for the wounded-lion view. Abelard may be describing an ideal case of cognition, a situation in which there is no restriction on the productive power of the imagination and thus images could be called “representative”

because representation would no longer be restricted to iconic representation of the physical world. This may be Abelard's account of divine cognition. Additionally the view would provide some explanation for the correspondence between thought and thing, and thus some way of assuring the soundness or veridicality of acts of understanding, an element otherwise missing from Abelard's writings.

Alongside the wounded-lion view in the commentary on the *De Interpretatione* there is a second explanation of our cognition of insensibles, one that de-emphasizes the cognitive importance of the image's representative qualities.<sup>9</sup> The example Abelard uses for this view is the statue of Achilles (*LI De in.* 3.01.35, G 315.24). When we look at a statue of Achilles we think of Achilles, not of the statue. The statue is iconically representative of someone, although certainly not Achilles. Abelard describes the image as functioning in the same manner as the statue. Because of the limitations of our cognitive faculties, images are iconically representative of some particular item, but reason uses the image as a sign of something other than the item represented (*LI De in.* 3.01.108, G 328.35).

On the statue-of-Achilles view, it is the intentionality of the act of understanding, and not the representative qualities of the image that are important. The intentional object of the understanding need not be the item represented in the image. The attention of the mind in thinking about some item, and not the representative qualities of the image determine the intentional object of the act of understanding. Abelard makes this claim several times in slightly different guises (cf. *LI Isag.* 27.2; Spade 1994, 139).

Whatever images we may employ, and however we may arrange them, they are irrelevant to the truth of understanding, so long as there is what Abelard calls "an attention of discretion" (*LI De in.* 3.01.107, G 328.24–29). This attention of discretion is the mind's using the power of reason and consciously paying attention and discerning – that is, having an act of understanding. In the case of our cognition of insensible items any image will do as long as we have an act of understanding that grasps the relevant nature or property of the insensible item.

When we attend to the nature and properties of insensible things, e.g. spirits or qualities, we do not sense; some construct one image and others another, yet each nevertheless correctly attends to the nature. When another person

and I each think about rationality (attending to rationality in its producing in the mind the ability to discern), then the attentions are each the same and true, even though we constitute diverse images; each of us employs some sign and should institute this sign as he pleases. (*LI De in.* 3.01.109, G 329.3–10)

There can be no clearer statement that the image need not iconically represent the item understood. Two people could have the same sound understanding of rationality and yet each employ a different image. Each image would be representative of something, but whatever it is each image iconically depicts it is certainly not rationality. Whatever image is employed is used as a sign of the understood item, without being a representative depiction of the understood item.

The statue-of-Achilles view is clearly a departure from the wounded-lion view. In the wounded-lion example the image is an accurate depiction of the form matter composition of the individual; on the Achilles view the particular image is irrelevant. The statue-of-Achilles view avoids the wounded-lion view's main problem: the formation of iconic images that are not representative of any particular item. The statue-of-Achilles view is also initially more plausible than the wounded-lion view. Change the nameplate on the base of any statue and it would become a statue of someone else. The image on the cover of this volume is certainly not an actual depiction of Abelard, but it is used as such. The strength of Abelard's argument for the Achilles view is the obvious point that I can more or less conventionally associate mental images and understandings. The particular image that arises in my mind when I think of Rome is idiosyncratically assigned, and largely irrelevant to my understanding of Rome.

However, there is a new problem – a sort of chicken-and-egg problem. To use the image as a sign of some insensible item, we must have a rational grasp of that insensible item. The only rational grasp Abelard describes is an act of understanding. But any act of understanding an insensible requires an image on which reason can focus. It seems that we must already know what we are going to use the image as a sign of before we use the image as a sign. If the Achilles view is to work, we must already understand what we are going to understand before we have the act of understanding it. This is troubling.

In the one passage where Abelard addresses this problem, he suggests that this initial grasp of insensible items is accomplished by an act of perception that is more than simple sensation but less than an act of reason.

Abelard attempts to answer the question: Do we sense subjects, accidents, or both (*LI Isag.* 95.1–96.17)? When a white horse is in front of us, we cognize (*cognosco*) both whiteness and the substance of horse. Our minds are turned (*animadverto*) to the property being-white (*esse album*) and to the nature being-a-horse (*esse equum*). But what do we sense? We might think that we sense the property and the nature, but we are wrong.

Sense seems to present us with many things which, although in perceiving them sense does not touch them. (*Multa quoque sensus videtur certificare, quae tamen ipse percipiendo non attractat.*) Rather, from those things the mind does perceive, the mind's reason understands certain other things which are joined to them, more from the nature of things than from sensation. (*LI Isag.* 95.12–15)

As sensation is a mental power (and not a power of an animate body) Abelard seems to be blurring the distinction between the mental power of sensation and the mental power of reason. He describes sensation as grasping sensibles, perception grasping insensibles, and then reason forming an act of understanding. Perception would seem to be almost automatic and very closely related to sensation, which would explain why we think we are sensing these items.

If someone were to say that, along with accidents, the subject is also sensed (*cum accidentibus etiam subiecta sentiri*), we would not deny that sight, penetrating color, perceives the nature of the subject body. What is strange if through color we were to see body? One often penetrates inside the substance of a body so that some judgment might be made about a subject body. We cognize (*cognosco*) the subject body as if through a window. (*LI Isag.* 95.33–38)

Sight perceives (*percipio*) but does not sense (*sentio*) the nature of the subject body. Insensibles are not sensed, but are perceived via sense.

Abelard's claim is that we cognize the subject body (the substrate underlying the sensible accidents) and the nature of the subject body (being-a-horse, etc.) because both are perceived *through* the senses but not *by* the power of sensation. Abelard may be claiming that,

with a horse in front of us, we sense the horse, and not just the sensible accidents of the particular horse. From someone who describes sensation as a direct and unmediated mental grasp of an extra-metal item, as Abelard does, such a view might be expected. Such a reading is complicated by Abelard's claim, in this very discussion, that each sense has its proper object and senses nothing else (*LI Isag.* 95.20). What Abelard may want to claim is that although sight sees only color, we do not see a white patch. The proper object of sight is color, but we do not see color, we see horses and bodies (cf. *LI De in.* 3.01.24, G 313.35; *LNPS* 542.5).

Perception of insensibles does not involve any reasoning process. We do not start with understandings of those items we can sense and then infer those items we cannot sense. Abelard talks as if we can perceive the insensible item in a single experience, and so perception would not be a form of inductive inference. Nor does he think perception is deductive. That we sense a color does not allow us to deduce the presence of a body that is colored. If color were able to be sustained by anything other than body, Abelard believes we would be able to perceive this other item through sense also (*Si vero color in alio quam in corpore posset esse, credo equidem eum sensu percipi*; *LI Isag.* 96.3). Abelard simply believes that reason is able to form acts of understanding insensibles because we perceive wholly insensible natures, properties, and other items.

In his later works, the *Treatise* and the *Nostrorum*, I believe that Abelard avoids these problems by formulating a new approach to the semantic questions he was primarily concerned with. Abelard never gives up his claims that all cognition is based upon sensation, and that understandings require a confused conception of sense or imagination on which to supervene. Rather, Abelard finds a way of demonstrating his semantic point without solving the problems inherent in his account of cognition.

When he addresses the question of why a universal understanding can be sound and yet not be of a particular thing he discusses the sentence "I want a hood" (*LNPS* 531.9; *TI* 88). Without discussing images at all, he argues that there is no particular individual hood which is the intentional object of his desire for a hood. The change in example allows Abelard to argue that a universal understanding need not be of a given particular item, without explaining how we form a generic image or have the initial grasp of the insensible nature.

He can discuss the semantic function of universal understandings without fully explaining the formation of universal understandings.

### III. ABSTRACTION

Universal understandings present a unique problem. Universals are not subject to sense, not because they are insensible, but because they do not exist. Strictly speaking discrete individuals are the intentional objects of universal understandings, but no particular discrete individual is discernible as the intentional object of any universal understanding. Even if the sentence "A man is in this house" is true only of Socrates, Socrates, as an individual, is not the intentional object of the understanding generated by the word "man" as employed in the sentence (*LI Isag.* 18.27; Spade 1994, 81).

Universal understandings are formed by abstraction. Abelard does not describe the process of forming abstract understandings, but the end results are understandings that are alone (*sola*) or apart from sense; bare (*nuda*) or stripped of some or all other forms; and pure (*pura*) or conceived of in abstraction from individuating conditions (*LI Isag.* 27.18–34, Spade 1994, 141–142; *LNPS* 526.9–30; *TI* 71–75). Each of these three is an alteration in the mode of conceiving some understood item. Alone, the first abstract mode marks the distinction between having an understanding of a sensible item and understanding it as a sensible item. To have an act of understanding fire as being substantially hot – that is, to conceive of fire as the kind of thing that is hot – is an act of understanding that would be properly described as alone. An understanding of fire as burning your hand is not (*LNPS* 526.14). A bare understanding grasps or attends to only some of the forms in an item. An understanding that is alone and bare, although abstract (since obviously no sensible item subsists as insensible, and no real thing subsists except as some combination of forms and perhaps matter), is not yet a universal understanding. An understanding that is merely alone and bare conceives a property or nature as discrete – as *this* humanity, *this* whiteness, *this* body, etc.<sup>10</sup>

Universal understandings must be pure as well as alone and bare. A universal act of understanding cannot conceive a nature or property as personally discrete. An understanding conceived purely abstracts from all individuating conditions. Because the understanding is pure,

Socrates, in the example above, can never be uniquely grasped as the object of the universal understanding man. To uniquely grasp an individual is to understand the individual as personally discrete, and distinct from all other individuals. Thus universal understandings are not of any particular individual but "pertain" to each (*LI Isag.* 19.9; Spade 1994, 87; *LNPS* 531.14; *TI* 81). Discrete particular items are the intentional objects of universal understandings but no one of these items is the unique intentional object any more than any other is.<sup>11</sup> It is tempting to think Abelard has something like satisfaction in mind. The universal understanding man pertains to Socrates because Socrates is a value of "x" for which it is true that x is human, but any acceptable value for "x" is as good as any other.

After describing the nature of universal understandings Abelard turns to their veridicality. Any universal understanding conceives some item otherwise than the item subsists. The problem is mostly with purity. There are any number of insensibles, and God at least is simple and so not a combination of forms, but nothing exists that is not discrete. So it seems that all universal understandings would be unsound, since they conceive of the item otherwise than the item subsists.

To answer this potential objection Abelard parses the word "otherwise" (*LI Isag.* 25.19; Spade 1994, 129; *TI* 81; *LNPS* 529.34). He frames the question: are all understandings which understand the individual otherwise than the individual subsists unsound? The sentence can be read in two ways. If "otherwise" modifies "understand" the understanding is sound. The mode of understanding (alone, bare, and pure) is otherwise than the thing subsists. If the mode of understanding differs from the mode of subsistence then there is no problem. Abelard rightly points out that no understanding grasps any individual in its entirety and so all understandings understand the individual otherwise than the individual subsists. Certainly not all understandings are unsound (*TI* 74). If however "otherwise" modifies the "the individual" and so we understand the individual to be otherwise than it in fact subsists, then the understanding is unsound. If I understand some thing to be alone, bare, and pure the understanding is unsound.

In this way discrete items can be the intentional objects for universal understandings. We first conceive of some nature or property of the item without conceiving of the others, and then conceive of

that nature or property purely. We move from the alone and bare conception of this humanity, to the alone bare and pure conception of humanity. The universal understanding humanity pertains to each discrete human being insofar as it is a human being, it grasps a nature all humans have. But because the act of understanding conceives its object purely, no particular human is, or could be, the unique intentional object of the act of understanding.

#### IV. OPINION, KNOWLEDGE, AND INTELLIGENCE

The account of cognition presented in the previous sections raises several serious epistemic questions. Most cannot be discussed here, but something should be said about the central epistemic problem that becomes strikingly clear in Abelard's account of abstraction. The objects of universal understandings are discrete particulars. If these understandings are to count as knowledge then our abstract universal knowledge will have discrete particulars as its object. Given the difficulty Abelard has in explaining how we can even form understandings of particular (insensible) natures or properties, it is hard to see how the pure conception of these natures or properties could rise to the level of knowledge. Like all nominalists Abelard would have trouble explaining how we could have abstract or universal knowledge in a universe of discrete particulars. Unlike many, he is quite pessimistic about our prospects for acquiring knowledge. This final section is an attempt to address the reasons for Abelard's pessimism, as well as its scope and importance.

Abelard's discussion of epistemic issues is less clear than other aspects of his thought. He uses several non-synonymous terms to describe the degree to which a nature or property is grasped in an understanding; an understanding is sound or empty, and it amounts to either opinion, knowledge, or intelligence. Unfortunately he uses these terms interchangeably, a difficulty he acknowledges when he attempts to clarify his position in the *Treatise* (TI 57–58). His main points are clear, but often must be determined by context.

A sound understanding is an understanding in concord or harmony with the *status* of the thing (LI *De in.* 321.21, 326.31; TI 58). A sound understanding is an act of attending to some nature or property of an item as that nature or property is found in the item. By contrast, empty understandings are acts attending to some nature or



property otherwise than it is, understanding the item to have a nature or property it does not have, getting it wrong. Unsound understandings are empty.

Obviously, some understandings grasp a nature or property more fully and completely than others. To mark the degrees of accuracy Abelard uses the terms "opinion" (*opinio*), "knowledge" (*scientia*), and "intelligence" (*intelligentia*). The three terms mark, in ascending order, the depth or completeness of the grasp of a nature or property; opinion is the lowest level grasp, intelligence the highest. Knowledge is between the two.

Intelligence is the full and complete grasp of a nature or property, a grasp which is attained exclusively by God. God alone has intelligence because God alone does not rely on sensation to form understandings (*LI Isag.* 23.12; Spade 1994, 113; *LI De in.* 3.01.122, G 330.37; *TI* 20–22). It seems God's intelligence derives from the fact that He is the creator of all things. He knows fully and completely the natures and properties of things, because he designed them and made them to be what they are (*LI Isag.* 23.11; Spade 1994, 113; *LNPS* 513.15). Human dependence on sensation precludes us from having intelligence, but not because of the fallibility of sensation. It is the very process of learning through experience via sensation that precludes intelligence. We must experience items and then form understandings. God decides what the item is and then He makes it. God grasps the item fully and completely in all its aspects. We cannot.

Abelard genuinely wavers in his use of "opinion." Sometimes "opinion" is used to denote understandings with a very low-level grasp of the nature or property in question but which are nonetheless sound (*LI Isag.* 23.18; Spade 1994, 115). Sometimes "opinion" is used to denote unsound understandings (*LI De in.* 3.01.75, G 321.34). On either use opinion is at the opposite end of a spectrum from intelligence.

Knowledge is an understanding in which a nature or property is grasped to a degree somewhere between opinion and intelligence. Abelard will also call the habit of having such understandings of a nature or property "knowledge" (*LI Cat.* 227.15; *TI* 27). This is not to give any criterion of justification, let alone any argument for veridicality for these understandings, but just to state what Abelard most frequently means when he uses the word "knowledge." As with "opinion" his use of "knowledge" wavers. Emphasizing the

high end of the spectrum, he writes that knowledge is equivalent to intelligence, calling knowledge a “God-like excess of contemplation” that humans cannot attain without divine intervention (*TI* 21–22). On the other hand, in commenting on the difference between a disposition and a habit, he writes that even a little knowledge of what is poorly known is difficult to change (*LI Cat.* 227.15). Certainly, in this second passage, knowledge is not a God-like excess. Abelard will also claim that some things are better known than others, clearly implying that there are different degrees of grasping natures and properties, and that anything along this range of the spectrum he will call “knowledge” (see *LI Isag.* 96.6, where he quotes Boethius with approval; cf. also *LI Cat.* 224.28).

There is no clear boundary to differentiate between opinion and knowledge, or between knowledge and intelligence. Because the criteria for what counts as knowledge are unclear, the meaning and extent of Abelard’s pessimism about our ability to have abstract universal knowledge is also unclear. Humans cannot have intelligence; this is an obvious fact, not a deep epistemic insight. However, Abelard may have held a more pessimistic view. Abelard may have thought that our understandings of particular insensibles and our abstract universal understandings do not rise above the level of sound opinion. I think the pessimistic reading may be warranted. We can have sound understandings of insensibles, and even sound universal understandings, but these understandings cannot be very full or complete, or even accurate.

Abelard does not allow himself any ontological wiggle room with regard to the objects of knowledge. Discrete individuals are the objects of knowledge. In a sense Abelard finds troubling that even God’s intelligence has discrete particulars as its object (*LI Isag.* 26.16; Spade 1994, 135). We can only know what exists, and nothing exists that is not discrete (*LI Cat.* 211.15, 112.33, 213.16). Discrete particulars are the objects of our knowledge. Universal understandings are formed by abstraction from the understandings of discrete particulars. The degrees of abstraction are changes in the mode of conceiving not changes the intentional object (*LI Cat.* 142.20). Such understandings can only be formed based on experience of sensible individuals. Should such universal understandings rise to the level of knowledge, the discrete individual would be the object of knowledge. Abelard

is committed to the view that discrete particulars are somehow the objects of universal knowledge. This is just to say that Abelard faces a problem traditionally faced by nominalists. Many nominalists will tweak their system in order to explain how we have knowledge. Abelard simply bites the bullet, and says that we do not have knowledge.

The obstacles to our forming universal knowledge have been discussed above. Most natures and properties are insensible, and all universal understandings are pure. Even basic cognition of insensibles is problematic, and nothing exists purely. It is Abelard's awareness of these obstacles and his pessimism as to their solution that is noteworthy. Abelard's pessimism about our epistemic prospects is shaped by the principle that those things we can better represent in a confused conception of the mind we can better understand (*LI Cat.* 224.32). Because of our dependence on sensation we cannot represent insensibles well. The very idea of a pure representation may seem absurd, but that is exactly what Abelard describes in the wounded-lion view. For these reasons it seems that we cannot have very full complete or even accurate universal understandings. The requirement that we must imagine what cannot be sensed as if it were sensible compels us to think of insensibles as having any number of sensible qualities. Abelard acknowledges that the inaccurate image results in an inaccurate act of understanding (*TI* 70; *LNPS* 524.38).

There seems to be every reason for thinking universal understandings would be unsound. If we are compelled to think of insensible items as having sensible qualities, then the understanding conceives the item to be otherwise than the item actually subsists. Abelard is well aware of these difficulties. He claims that universal understandings are sound, without exhibiting any real confidence in his claim. The argument he offers on this point is simply weak. "The experiences of the senses compel us to think of insensible items as if they were sensible," but if this makes such understandings unsound, "what understanding should not be called unsound?" (*TI* 77). The obvious answer might be "all of them!" but Abelard never explicitly considers this a possibility. Given the grave difficulties Abelard himself raises, and his lackluster defense of even the soundness of universal understandings, a reasonable conclusion to draw is that we do not have a very full or complete grasp of natures or properties.

Such a grasp may amount to low-level knowledge or may merely be sound opinion. Thus, if the central epistemic question is "How do we have universal knowledge of discrete particulars?", the answer is very likely to be "We do not."

The final question to address is, why was Abelard unconcerned by these epistemic difficulties? The reason, I think, is that these epistemic questions were secondary to the semantic issues he was concerned with. One need not have a full and complete grasp of a nature or property to use words correctly. Opinion is sufficient for the imposition and use of words. The person who first imposes or creates the word intended the word to generate an understanding of some nature or property even if he does not know how to think about that nature or property (*LI Isag.* 23.20; Spade 1994, 116). In fact the "imposer" can be completely ignorant of the nature or property and yet have an understanding of sufficient fullness to successfully impose and use a word (*LI Cat.* 122.5). In the examples Abelard uses, upon hearing the word "stone" we each have an understanding of stone, but no one really knows the nature being-a-stone. Such knowledge is not necessary for communication. The semantic issues involved in reference are distinct from the epistemic issues involved in an account of knowledge. Abelard did believe that knowledge of the hidden causes and natures of things is properly the realm of physics not logic, and even then, knowledge of hidden causes is really only had by God (*LNPS* 506.4, 423.25; *LI De in.* 3.09.48, G 423.32). Abelard was much more concerned with the logic and semantics. It is an open question whether the epistemic issues he raises should have made him more concerned with the possibility of sufficient knowledge of natures and causes.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

1. The most noteworthy deviation is Abelard's claim that the soul is not the form of the person, and that those who attribute such a view to Aristotle are simply mistaken. Given Abelard's conception of form, there would be no way to explain insanity or knowledge were the soul the form of the person. Cf. *LI Cat.* 212.38.
2. In *IP De in.* 74, Abelard writes that cognition is not a topic discussed in the *De interpretatione* but is more properly the topic of the *De anima*. It is not clear whether Abelard thought the view he develops would have been found in the *De anima*.

3. Abelard writes that nothing exists that is not discrete, but it is not clear that everything that is discrete is an individual. It seems plausible that the soul and the mereological parts of individuals would be discrete and not count as individuals. Any discrete item can be either sensed or imagined, and thus can be the intentional object of an act of understanding.
4. Abelard has nothing to say about the obvious role of memory, an interesting omission to anyone looking for Augustinian threads in Abelard.
5. Abelard's commitment to such an account of acts of understanding may reflect some deeper nominalist inclinations, but he never argues as much. He makes some comments to suggest an underlying theory of habits of mind, that is habits of having sound, or at least the same, understandings of certain items. Such a habit of intentional acts of understanding might eliminate any philosophical need to posit concepts distinct from the act of understanding. See *LI Cat.* 227.15; *TI* 27.
6. An understanding is not itself a concept distinct from any act of understanding. When Abelard writes of words signifying understandings one might think that these signified understandings are themselves somehow concepts distinct from the act of thinking. This is not the case. Words signify understandings by generating an act of understanding in the mind of a hearer, an act which has as its intentional object the item whose nature or property the speaker wished the hearer to think of. Abelard most frequently describes this kind of "signification" as generating or establishing an act of understanding in a hearer's mind.
7. We have cognition of very many items which we cannot sense and must imagine inaccurately; insensible items (like the soul), insensible natures and their constituent properties (like humanity, rationality, and mortality), relational properties (like paternity). Indeed, even properties like sitting are not accessible to sense. Cf. *LI Isag.* 23.18, 95.20; Spade 1994, 115; *LNPS* 542.5; *TI* 77.
8. It is because of Abelard's use of examples like this that it is clear we understand individuals as well as the natures and properties of individuals.
9. It is not uncommon to find multiple incompatible arguments alongside each other in Abelard's writings. Abelard seems to have worked by revising and editing the same text, probably the text he taught from, each time he confronted the material. Much of contemporary Abelard scholarship is concerned with (a) describing instances where Abelard's writings contain two or more incompatible solutions to a problem, and (b) trying to discern the patterns of development in Abelard's thought. In this chapter I simply want to present Abelard's two distinct explanations.

10. A question arises which is really a question of metaphysics: when I form the alone and bare understanding of this humanity, is the particular nature itself, or the individual which has the nature, the object of the understanding? My assumption is that natures are not the objects of the understanding. The individual (or discrete item) is the object of the understanding, and the alone and bare understanding is an abstract mode of conceiving that individual or item. The same is true for pure understandings. To make the nature or property itself the object of the understanding would give natures and properties an ontological status I do not believe they have. See *TI* 75–76.
11. The collection or set of individuals is also not the intentional object. All the humans in the world are not collectively the intentional object of the understanding humanity. Such a position might be a form of collective realism.
12. I wish to thank Peter King, Jeffrey Brower, and M. Gregory Oakes for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this chapter.

## 7 Trinity

During the Middle Ages, theology is the preeminent academic discipline and, as a result, most great thinkers of this period are highly trained theologians. Although this much is common knowledge, it is sometimes overlooked that the systematic nature of medieval theology led its practitioners to develop full treatments of virtually every area within philosophy. Indeed, theological reflection not only provides the main context in which the medievals theorize about what we would now recognize as distinctively philosophical issues, but it is responsible for some of their most significant philosophical contributions. To give just a few examples: it is problems with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation that prompt medievals to develop the notions of substance and person in striking and original ways; it is problems with the doctrine of the Eucharist that lead them to consider the possibility of accidents that do not inhere; and it is problems of interpreting particular scriptural texts, such as the Book of Job, that introduce refinements in their understanding of the nature and purpose of evil.

In this chapter, I show how Abelard's treatment of a deep, logical problem associated with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity gives rise to important developments in his philosophy. As will emerge, in addressing this problem he not only presents a philosophically interesting account of the Trinity, but also develops a highly sophisticated theory of identity or numerical sameness, as well as a distinctive approach to issues now generally recognized under the rubric "the problem of material constitution."

## I. THE LOGICAL PROBLEM OF THE TRINITY

It is well known that the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity poses a serious philosophical problem. According to this doctrine, God exists in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – each of whom is distinct from each of the others: the Father is not the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son. At the same time, however, the doctrine requires that each of the Persons is God: the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. The problem arises when we add to these claims the traditional Christian commitment to monotheism – that is, the view that the divine persons (in the words of the Athanasian creed) “are not three Gods, but there is one God.”

As even this brief description of the doctrine makes clear, the problem of the Trinity is the logical problem of explaining the relationship of the divine persons to one another. On the one hand, it seems that the relationship must be identity, since each is divine and there is only one divine being. On the other hand, it seems that the relationship must be distinction – indeed, as the names of the divine persons suggest, they are traditionally thought to possess different essential attributes: only the Father begets, only the Son is begotten, and only the Holy Spirit proceeds or “spirates” from that of which it is the spirit. But no things, not even divine persons, can be both identical to and distinct from one another.

The logical problem of the Trinity is a topic to which Abelard devoted a great deal of attention. As he tells us in his autobiography, this problem led to the writing of his first major work in theology, the *Theologia “summi boni,”* on the basis of which he was first condemned as a heretic (HC 83; Radice 1974, 79). Given Abelard’s temperament, it is not surprising that the embarrassment and public humiliation caused by this condemnation failed to produce in him any lessening of interest in the problem of the Trinity, or any inclination to abandon his original solution. On the contrary, it served rather as an impetus to develop the details of that original solution further and to defend it at greater length. As John Marenbon has pointed out:

When Abelard was forced, at the Council of Soissons, to commit his *Theologia Summi Boni* to the flames with his own hands, his reaction was not to give up the project he had begun, nor even to modify or soften his approach.



Within four or five years he had produced a new *Theologia*, boldly entitled *Theologia Christiana*, which incorporated about nine-tenths of the *Theologia Summi Boni* into a treatise nearly three times its size.<sup>1</sup>

Abelard never completed his *Theologia Christiana*, and apparently never intended it to circulate widely. He does, however, incorporate parts of it into the final version of his *Theologia*, namely, the *Theologia "scholarium."* As in the case of the *Theologia Christiana*, this work remains true to the spirit (if not to the letter) of his earliest views about the Trinity; and although he twice introduces changes into the published version of this work – as part of a futile attempt to respond to criticisms that eventually led to his being condemned as a heretic for a second time – he shows no interest in altering the basic structure of his solution to the logical problem of the Trinity.

Abelard adopts the same basic strategy for resolving the logical problem of the Trinity in all three versions of the *Theologia*. He starts by distinguishing various senses in which the terms "same" (*idem*) and "different" (*diversum*)<sup>2</sup> are used and then argues that the sense in which the divine persons are different is compatible with the sense in which they are the same.<sup>3</sup> The details of these distinctions vary from work to work, but the underlying conception of the Trinity for which they are mobilized is the same: the divine persons, Abelard always says, are the same in virtue of their substance or essence, but differ in virtue of what is proper to each. In his earliest work, the *Theologia "summi boni,"* Abelard describes the difference of the persons in terms of a *difference in definition*.<sup>4</sup> In his later works, however, he states this difference more precisely in terms of a *difference of property*, though he continues to associate this notion closely with that of difference in definition (cf. *TC* 3.164 and *TSch* 2.97). Thus, in the *Theologia Christiana*, the work in which the notion of difference in property makes its first appearance, and which is representative of his mature view about the Trinity, Abelard says the following about the divine persons:

Their substance is entirely the same – where by "the same" I mean *essentially* or *numerically the same*, just as the substance of a blade and a sword, or of this man and this animal, is the same. Nevertheless, the persons – that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – are different from one another in a way analogous to those things that are *different in definition* or *property*.

That is, they are different by virtue of the fact that, although God the Father is entirely the same essence as God the Son or God the Holy Spirit, there is one feature proper (*proprium*) to God the Father, insofar as he is Father, another to God the Son, and yet another to the Holy Spirit. (*TC* 3.164)

Although Abelard invokes various notions of sameness and difference to explain the relationship among the divine persons, we shall see that two are at the heart of his account – namely, essential sameness and difference in property.

In what follows, I present and then offer a limited assessment of Abelard's account of the Trinity, focusing on the extent to which it succeeds in providing a solution to the logical problem just mentioned. My discussion is divided into three main parts. I begin (in §II) by providing a preliminary account of the notions of essential sameness and difference in property; since the former notion is (at least initially) the more difficult to understand, I focus most of what I say here on it. I turn next (in §III) to the application of essential sameness and difference in property to the divine persons. Here I argue that there is a straightforward and natural application of these notions, one that is not only suggested by Abelard's discussion of material constitution, but also provides us with an attractive solution to the logical problem of the Trinity. As it turns out, this is not Abelard's own way of applying the notions. Like most other medieval philosophers, Abelard accepts the doctrine of divine simplicity, and this, as we shall see, requires him to make certain departures from the straightforward application of the notions. In the final section of the paper (§IV), I discuss Abelard's own account of the Trinity. Here my conclusion is that, for all its subtlety and sophistication, it remains incomplete as a response to the logical problem.

## II.     SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE

### *II.1     Sameness in essence and difference in property*

The divine persons, says Abelard, are the same in virtue of their substance. Whenever he describes this type of sameness, he does so in terms of the notion of essential sameness, which he explains in the *Theologia Christiana* as follows:

We call something *essentially the same* as another when the essence of each is numerically the same – that is, when the one thing and the other are such that they are numerically the same essence, just as for example a sword is numerically the same essence as a blade (*mucro*),<sup>5</sup> a substance is numerically the same essence as a body (or an animal, or a man, or even Socrates), and something white is numerically the same essence as something hard. (*TC* 3.139)<sup>6</sup>

According to Abelard, an object *a* is essentially the same as an object *b* just in case the essence of *a* – that is, the essence which is *a* – is numerically the same as the essence which is *b*. Indeed, as he goes on to say, *a* and *b* are essentially the same just in case they are numerically the same essence. It is important not to misunderstand Abelard here. In contemporary philosophy, the term “essence” is associated with essential properties or abstract objects such as Platonic forms. When Abelard uses this term, however, or the corresponding Latin term, *essentia*, he is merely following a standard twelfth-century convention according to which *essentia* means a *concrete, particular thing*.<sup>7</sup> Thus, when he says that *a* and *b* are essentially the same, he just means that *a* and *b* are the same thing (*essentia*).

If this were all Abelard had to say about essential sameness, it would be natural to suppose that what he has in mind is just our notion of identity – that is, the notion of identity associated with ordinary predicate logic. After all, how could *a* be the same thing as *b* and yet fail to be identical with *b*? It is at this point, however, that essential sameness becomes difficult to understand. For whatever else Abelard thinks about it, it is clear that he does not think essential sameness is identity in our sense.<sup>8</sup> If *a* is identical with *b*, then *a* and *b* must share all the same properties or attributes. But according to Abelard, this is not true of things that are the same in essence:

Some things are essentially the same even though they are distinguished by their properties. This is because their properties remain so completely unmixed that a property of the one is never participated in by the other, even if the substance of each is completely the same in number. For example, in the case of a particular waxen image, the wax – that is, the matter itself – is numerically the same as what is made from it [namely, the waxen image]. In this case, however, the matter and what is made from it do not share their properties in common, since the matter of the waxen image is not made from matter (that is, the wax itself is not made from wax), just as what is made from the matter in this case is not the matter (that is, the waxen image is not the matter of the waxen image). (*TC* 3.140)

According to Abelard, things may be essentially the same and yet distinguished by their properties. To support this claim, he introduces the example of a lump of wax that has taken on an image, say, from a particular signet ring. The wax, he says, is essentially the same as the waxen image, even though the wax and the image have different properties. The waxen image has the property of being made from wax, but the wax itself does not have this property (indeed, he thinks it cannot have it). We shall have to return to this example later on (see §II.2 below). For now, however, I merely want to call attention to something this example helps to make clear – namely, that essential sameness is not identity. Things essentially the same can differ in property, and things different in property cannot be identical. As in the case of Abelard’s example, we shall have to return to the notion of difference in property later on (§III). For now, however, we may suppose that an object *a* differs in property from an object *b* just in case *a* has a property that *b* lacks or vice versa.

So far so good. But a difficulty still remains. If essential sameness is not to be understood in terms of identity, then how is it to be understood? I want to suggest that the best way to characterize essential sameness is by saying that although it is not identity, it is a genus of which identity is a species (or, a determinate of which identity is a determinate). As we have seen, some of the things that are essentially the same are also identical (as in the case of a sword and a blade), but some of them are not identical (as in the case of a waxen image and the wax from which it is made). By introducing the relation of essential sameness, therefore, and claiming that it is compatible with difference of property, I contend that Abelard is attempting to distinguish a type of sameness without identity.

It is important to emphasize that essential sameness is not just a type of sameness, but a type of *numerical* sameness. For as we have seen, Abelard thinks that an object *a* and an object *b* are essentially the same just in case *a* and *b* are numerically the same in a certain respect, namely, in respect of their essence (i.e., the concrete thing which “they” are). The following passage from the *Theologia Christiana* helps to explain why Abelard thinks the notions of essential sameness and numerical sameness must be connected in this way:

All these things – that is, the things that are essentially the same – are also said to be *numerically the same*. The reason is that, since the essence of each is the same, the number of things cannot be multiplied in them, nor can an enumeration (*computatio*) of these things be performed on the basis of their distinction (*discretione*) – that is, an enumeration such that “one,” “two,” etc., may be said of them. (*TC* 3.139; cf. also *TSB* 3.92 and *TSch* 2.168)

Whenever Abelard speaks about numerical sameness, or sameness in number (*eadem numero*), he always does so in terms of counting. Things that are the same in number are to be *counted* as one thing, and “they” are to be counted in this way, not because of any arbitrary decision on our part, but because in cases of numerical sameness there is only one thing to count. Thus, when Abelard says that *a* and *b* are essentially the same – that is, numerically the same thing (*essentia*) – this is because *a* and *b* are one thing, and hence must be counted accordingly.<sup>9</sup>

In light of its connection to numerical sameness, we can provide the following, much more definite, characterization of essential sameness. Essential sameness is a relation whose *relata* are to be counted as a single thing. In some cases, the *relata* of this relation will be identical, as in the case of Abelard’s sword and blade, while in other cases, such as the wax and image, the *relata* will be distinct in property, and hence non-identical. Even in cases of the latter sort, however, the *relata* will not be numerically distinct, since they are one thing. Thus, numerical sameness without identity is intended by Abelard to be a relation that is weaker than identity (because its *relata* do not share all the same properties) but stronger than numerical distinction (because its *relata* are a single thing). Indeed, we can just think of numerical sameness without identity as a two-place relation standing midway between identity and numerical distinctness of essence, as figure 1 indicates.

If we return to the logical problem of the Trinity with the distinctions indicated at figure 1, we can see that the type of relation identified at (IB) – namely, numerical sameness without identity – provides a basis for a solution to the problem. For as we seen, the logical problem of the Trinity is just that of explaining how there can be *both* a single divine being *and* three distinct persons each of whom is divine. The relation at (IB), however, appears to provide the resources for an explanation. For assuming it makes sense to suppose such

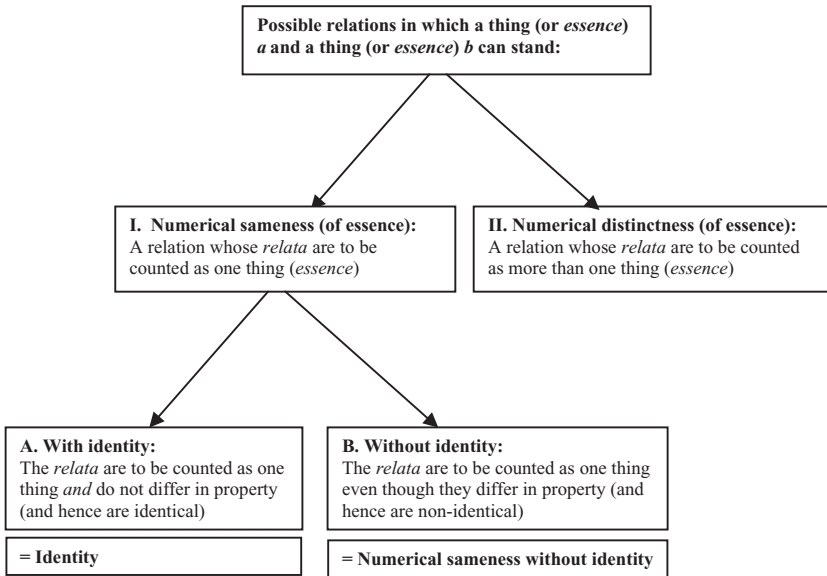


Figure 1

a relation exists, then we can say that each of the divine persons is numerically the same as God but nonetheless distinct from one another. In other words, the relation at (IB) allows us to preserve a real distinction among the persons without abandoning the claim that there is one and only one God.

Of course, the success of this type of solution depends on the coherence of supposing that there is a relation of the sort identified at (IB). But could there be such relation? Most contemporary philosophers would say “no,” since they suppose that for any *a* and *b*, *a* and *b* are to be counted as the same thing only if *a* = *b*. But if this is correct, there can be no relation weaker than identity that is nonetheless a kind of numerical sameness.

The notion of essential sameness may be unfamiliar, but it is not by any means incoherent. Indeed, as Abelard’s use of the example involving the waxen image is intended to show, this notion is not only coherent, but has a strong intuitive appeal. In order to explain its appeal, as well as to prepare for Abelard’s own account of the Trinity, we need to examine the example of the waxen image, and others like it, in more detail.

## II.2 *Numerical sameness without identity and material constitution*

Abelard appeals to the relation of essential sameness – or more specifically, that species of essential sameness I am calling *numerical sameness without identity* – in the course of explicating a number of philosophical and theological doctrines. In each case, he appeals to what is, at bottom, the same type of example, that of a material object's taking on some shape or form and thereby coming to constitute a further object.<sup>10</sup> We have already seen him appeal to a lump of wax which, after being imprinted with an image, comes to constitute a waxen image. In the course of explicating certain other doctrines, he also appeals to examples involving blocks of stone or lumps of bronze which, in virtue of their shape, constitute statues of various kinds.<sup>11</sup>

These types of examples are familiar from contemporary literature and are at the root of what is now commonly referred to as “the problem of material constitution.” In general, we may say that the problem of material constitution arises whenever we appear to have a single object falling under different kinds – that is, kinds associated with incompatible sets of defining properties. Thus, in the case of a statue and its constituent lump of bronze, we appear to have a single object (namely, some matter) falling under different kinds (namely, statue and lump of bronze) that clearly have incompatible sets of defining properties (as is clear from their different persistence conditions: a lump of bronze can, whereas a statue cannot, survive being melted down and recast as another statue). In such cases, the problem is to decide whether we really have one object or two – or, as the question is now commonly put, whether the relation of constitution is just identity. The lesson to be drawn from Abelard's discussion of such examples, I now want to argue, is that even if constitution is not identity, this does not imply the existence of more than one object.<sup>12</sup>

As Abelard's own examples help to make clear, the problem of material constitution is generated, at least in part, by the fact that we have conflicting intuitions about the individuation of (and hence the proper way to count) certain kinds of material objects. When we are presented with a bronze statue, say of Athena, common sense tells us to count only one object – “there is one and only one object

on Athena's pedestal." And this is because common sense individuates such objects according to their matter. Thus, in the case of Athena, whose constituent matter fills precisely the same region as it does, common sense tells us to count one and only one object in this region – and this despite that fact that statues and lumps have different persistence conditions and so must be different kinds of material object.

If we turn our attention, however, to the difference between statues and lumps, we find ourselves strongly inclined to count (at least) two objects in the region occupied by Athena. That is to say, in addition to having common sense intuitions that dispose us to individuate material objects according to their matter, we also have rational intuitions disposing us to individuate them according to their identity conditions. Since the region occupied by Athena contains a statue and a lump of bronze, and no statue is identical with its constituent lump, reason tells us that there must be (at least) two objects in that region. The problem, as we can now see, is that in the case of Athena we are led, on the basis of common sense and rational intuition, to accept claims of the following sort:

- (1) Both a statue and a lump of bronze fill a region *R*; the statue in *R* is not identical to the lump of bronze in *R*; nonetheless, *R* is filled by only one object.
- (2) Both a statue and a lump of bronze fill a region *R*; the statue in *R* is not identical to the lump of bronze in *R*; hence, *R* is filled by (at least) two objects.

Claims (1) and (2) are clearly incompatible. As is evident from their incompatibility, moreover, our intuitions about how to individuate material objects are inconsistent as well. Since these intuitions are responsible for generating the problem of material constitution in the first place, we can think of the problem, at least initially, as that of deciding which of our conflicting intuitions to accept.

As we have seen, Abelard thinks the statue and lump of bronze constitute a single object. Thus, he sides with the intuitions favoring (1). In order to explain how a single material object can nonetheless belong to two genuinely different kinds, however, he introduces the relation of numerical sameness without identity. In this way, he is able to count the statue and its constituent lump of bronze as a single material object while at the same time allowing for the obvious fact



that *being a statue* and *being a lump of bronze* are different kinds to which objects can belong.

Unlike Abelard, contemporary philosophers typically side with the intuitions favoring (2). Moreover, there is a perfectly good reason for this: the intuitions favoring (2) provide us with a straightforward and principled way of counting material objects, whereas the intuitions favoring (1) do not. According to the intuitions favoring (2), we should count one and only one material object wherever *a* and *b* are identical, and more than one such object wherever *a* and *b* are distinct or non-identical. But how are we to count if we adopt the intuitions favoring (1)? These intuitions allow us to count a single object even in a region filled by a statue and a lump of bronze distinct from it. But this seems problematic. For if we cannot count *two* material objects in a region filled by a statue and a lump of bronze distinct from it, then how are we supposed to count?

If Abelard's solution left him with no way of responding to this problem, there would indeed be grounds for rejecting it. But in fact this is not the case. There is a principled way of counting material objects that is consistent both with common sense and with the rejection of (2). Michael Rea, one of the few contemporary philosophers to have discussed this sort of view, formulates the principle in this way:

We count one object (and only one object) in every region that is filled by matter unified in some object-constituting way. We count one *statue* in every region that is filled by matter arranged statuewise; we count one *lump* in every region that is filled by matter arranged lumpwise; and we count one *object* in every region that is filled by matter arranged in either or both of these ways (or any other object-constituting way). Thus, when we recognize a statue and a lump in a particular region and deny that the statue is identical with the lump, we are committed to the claim that there is matter in the region arranged both statuewise and lumpwise, and that being a statue is something different from being a lump; but all of this is consistent with there being just one object in the region.<sup>13</sup>

This passage suggests a general principle for counting that nicely accommodates Abelard's views about material objects. If we substitute talk of kinds where Rea talks of objects being arranged *F-wise*, we can state the principle as follows: count one object wherever there is matter belonging to kind *F*; count one object wherever there is

matter belonging to kind *G*; and count one (and only one) object wherever there is matter belonging to either or both of these (and perhaps some other) kinds.<sup>14</sup> While this principle is explicitly formulated for counting material objects, it can easily be extended to cover (at least a certain class of) immaterial objects. For to the extent that immaterial objects have forms or properties, they too can be said to have a kind of “matter” – namely, whatever it is that plays the role of subject for these forms or properties. But, then, to the extent that even immaterial objects have “matter,” they too can be counted in a way that is consistent with this principle.

As far as I can tell, there is no reason to think that this principle for counting material objects is incoherent, nor indeed any compelling reason to prefer the intuitions favoring (2) rather than (1). If I am right about this, however, Abelard’s appeal to the relation of numerical sameness without identity would appear to be perfectly defensible. He must, of course, pay an intuitive price for appealing to such a relation to solve the problem of material constitution – namely, giving up the idea that material objects are individuated according to their identity conditions. But note: there is an intuitive price to pay no matter how we solve the problem, since the intuitions favoring (1) and (2) are both very strong, and hence whichever option we take entails the rejection of deep-seated intuitions. It is also worth noting that those who, unlike Abelard, reject (1) in favor of (2) have a further price to pay. For it apparently follows from the acceptance of (2) that more than one material object can occupy the same place at the same time – and hence that in cases such as Abelard’s statue and lump of bronze, we have non-identical material objects that are literally *co-located*.<sup>15</sup> This, however, is extremely unintuitive, and something which almost no medieval would accept.<sup>16</sup> As Boethius says, “two bodies will not occupy one place” (*De Trin.* 1).

Considerations of the sort just mentioned may well provide reason for thinking that Abelard’s solution to the problem of material constitution is not only coherent but preferable to other, more familiar ways of solving the problem. Even so, my argument to this point is intended not as a defense of the plausibility of Abelard’s solution to this problem, but only as a defense of its coherence. For provided that the notion of numerical sameness without identity is coherent – and hereafter I shall take its coherence for granted – we have all the resources needed to resolve the logical problem of the Trinity.

## III. SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE IN THE TRINITY

III.1 *An Abelardian (but not Abelard's) account of the Trinity*

As we have seen, each of the examples that Abelard discusses in the context of material constitution involves one kind of material object (a lump of bronze, stone, or wax) taking on some shape or form and thereby coming to constitute another kind of object (a statue or an image). It is between these two kinds of object, moreover, that Abelard thinks the relation of numerical sameness without identity holds. Now, since these two kinds of object are related in the way that matter, on an Aristotelian view, is related to the form-matter composite of which it is a constituent, Abelard's view is that the *relata* of the relation of numerical sameness without identity are the matter of hylomorphic compounds on the one hand and the hylomorphic compounds themselves on the other.

On the basis of Abelard's account of material constitution, we can develop a useful model for understanding of the nature of the divine persons and their relationship to one another. According to this model, each of the divine persons is a hylomorphic structure or unity. Thus, just as in our earlier example of Athena we have a single object (namely, matter) falling under distinct kinds (namely, *being a statue* and *being lump of bronze*), so too in the case of the Trinity we have single object (namely, the divine substance) falling under distinct forms or properties (namely, *being a father*, *being a son*, and *being a spirit*). Moreover, just as in the earlier case we have distinct hylomorphic structures (a statue and a lump of bronze) constituting a single object (namely, Athena), so too in the case of the Trinity we have distinct hylomorphic structures (a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) constituting a single divine being (namely, God).

On this material-constitution model of the Trinity, therefore, each of the divine persons is conceived of along the lines of a hylomorphic structure having the very same thing (namely, the divine substance) as one of its constituents. But since each of the divine persons will be essentially the same as this constituent – on the grounds that hylomorphic compounds are essentially the same as their constituent matter – it will follow (due to the transitivity of essential sameness) that each of the divine persons will also be essentially the same as each of the others. On the other hand, since each of the divine persons

is also a compound consisting of the divine substance together with a distinct form or property, each of the persons will also be really distinct from each of the others. The virtue of this model, therefore, is that it allows for both enough unity to preserve the numerical sameness of the divine persons and enough complexity to preserve their real distinction in form or property.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, there are some obvious dissimilarities between the Trinity and ordinary material objects. For example, what plays the role of the matter in the case of material objects is literally material, and hence the hylomorphic structures or unities constituted from their matter will be genuine form-matter composites. In the case of the Trinity, however, what plays the role of matter is an immaterial object and hence the divine persons can be said to be “hylomorphic” compounds only in an extended or analogical sense. Again, in the case of material objects such as a waxen image, the hylomorphic structures constitute only accidental unities – that is to say, they are what Abelard would call artificial, as opposed to natural, kinds of object, since their forms (for example, their shapes) are accidental – that is, only contingently possessed – and hence can be lost without the destruction of their matter. The same is not true, however, in the case of the Trinity. Following tradition, Abelard conceives of properties such as *being a father* and *being a son* as essential properties of the divine substance, and hence such that the divine substance could not exist without them. Despite these and other such dissimilarities, however, conceiving of the Trinity on the model of material objects allows us to say that, although the persons are numerically the same, they are nonetheless distinct in form or property (provided of course that “form” or “property” is taken broadly enough to cover the attributes of either material or immaterial objects).

At this point it might be objected that a mere distinction in property among the persons, which is all the material-constitution model seems to allow us, is not enough to preserve the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. For according to this doctrine, there is a definite number of persons, namely, three. But to preserve the existence of three persons, we must say that the divine persons are not only distinct, but *numerically* distinct. And yet it is hard to see how there could be three of anything to count on the model of the Trinity just described. For although this model preserves the non-identity of the divine persons – the Father is not identical to the Son, and the Holy

Spirit is not identical to the Father or the Son – nonetheless, it requires us to individuate things according to their matter (as opposed to their identity conditions) – that is, according to whatever serves as the subject of their distinct forms or properties. But in that case, it would seem that if we are to count the divine persons at all, we must count them as one (and only one) thing.

The objection, however, overlooks the fact that we can count things other than material objects (or subjects of properties). Admittedly, if we count the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit only in the way we count material objects, then we must count them as one. But *material object* (or *subject of properties*) is not the only standard or unit that can serve as a basis for counting. As we have seen, even in the paradigm cases of material constitution, such as the case of Athena, we can count (at least) two distinct kinds – *being a statue* and *being a lump of bronze* – and we can even count two distinct *hylomorphic compounds* – the statue and the lump of bronze. In neither of these cases, however, are we counting material objects. Hence the principle for counting articulated earlier does not apply to them, and there is nothing to prevent us from counting them according to their identity conditions.<sup>18</sup>

Once it is realized, however, that we can count things other than material objects (or subjects of properties), and that we can count these other things according to their identity conditions, it should also be clear that nothing prevents us from saying that things that are numerically the same in one respect (say, *material object*) are nonetheless numerically distinct in another respect (say, *hylomorphic compound*). But this is all that is needed to show that the material-constitution model of the Trinity can preserve the numerical distinction of the persons, and hence escape the objection under consideration. For on this model each of the persons is analogous to a hylomorphic compound. Hence, according to it there are *three* numerically distinct persons, though only *one* substance or God.

The material-constitution account of the Trinity just developed ought to hold considerable interest for contemporary philosophers of religion. For one thing, it provides a genuine alternative to the standard contemporary approaches to the logical problem of the Trinity – which almost always take one of two forms. The first attempts to interpret monotheism, or the Christian claim that there exists only God, in such a way as to make it consistent with the existence

of three divine beings. This is the approach defended by Richard Swinburne,<sup>19</sup> and it is also usually accepted by those theologians who adopt a so-called social view of the Trinity.<sup>20</sup> The second approach, which as far as I can tell originates in the work of Peter Geach, adopts the assumption that identity is always sortal relative, and with it the view that things can be identical relative to one sortal (say, substance) but distinct relative to another (say, person).<sup>21</sup>

Both of the standard contemporary approaches to the Trinity face serious difficulties. The first approach appears to be coherent, but also inconsistent with the orthodox view of the Trinity. Indeed, it appears to be committed to a form of tritheism – the heresy according to which (to invert the Athanasian formula) “there is not one God, but there are three Gods.”<sup>22</sup> As for the second approach, the main difficulty is whether the notion of identity it presupposes is acceptable. Admittedly, a system of formal logic employing the notion of “relative identity” can be constructed in such a way that no contradiction can be deduced from it, as Peter van Inwagen has shown.<sup>23</sup> But as even van Inwagen himself admits, it is unclear whether the implications of this system, in particular its ontological implications, are ultimately coherent, much less acceptable.<sup>24</sup>

The difficulties facing these approaches bring us to a second reason why the material-constitution account of the Trinity is of significant interest. In addition to providing a genuine alternative to the standard contemporary approaches, it appears to be preferable to them. For it is both consistent with monotheism and coherent. Indeed, it may very well be that Abelard’s notion of “numerical sameness without one identity” provides the only coherent *and* orthodox way of resolving the logical problem of the Trinity.<sup>25</sup>

### III.2 *Divine simplicity*

Despite the appeal of the material-constitution account of the Trinity, and the fact that it is naturally suggested by Abelard’s own discussion of material constitution, it is not an account of the Trinity that Abelard himself accepts. This account presupposes a certain amount of complexity in God – in particular, distinct forms that together with the divine substance constitute distinct objects, namely, each of the divine persons – whereas Abelard, like most other medieval philosophers, accepts the doctrine of divine simplicity.

According to the doctrine of divine simplicity, God is an absolutely simple being, with no distinct parts, properties, forms, or metaphysical complexity of any kind. Although Abelard assumes this doctrine in all three versions of his *Theologiae*, he discusses it at length only in the *Theologia "scholarium."* Indeed, in this work he prefaces his whole discussion of the logical problem of the Trinity with a long section entitled "How there is unity in God" (*quanta sit unitas in deo*). Here is how Abelard initially formulates the doctrine of divine simplicity:

We confess the unity, or simplicity, or identity of the divine substance in such a way that just as it remains completely devoid of parts, so also it remains completely devoid of accidents; nor can it be changed in any way at all, nor can there be anything in it that is not it itself. And so it is the same completely simple and individual substance that is the Father and the Son and also the Holy Spirit; and the same thing is also the whole Trinity itself, that is, these three persons simultaneously. (*TSch* 2.68)

Note that this initial formulation of the doctrine appears to be consistent with the presence of genuine complexity in God. Indeed, from this formulation it might appear that Abelard is concerned with excluding only certain kinds of complexity in God – namely, those associated with parts, accidents, and change – and on the basis of their absence in God to infer merely that the divine persons, and indeed the whole Trinity, must be the same substance or *thing*. If this were all that Abelard thought divine simplicity required, his understanding of the doctrine would be perfectly compatible with the account of the Trinity developed above. For as we have seen, the divine persons can be numerically the same substance or thing while at the same time possessing distinct forms or properties. Nor would admitting complexity of this sort compromise the view that God is simple in the sense of having no parts (since he has no material parts), no accidents (since all of his forms or properties are essential), and being incapable of change (since the possibility of change requires the possession of accidents).

But Abelard takes divine simplicity to require much more than this. Indeed, as he interprets the doctrine, it excludes not only the complexity associated with material parts, accidents, and change, but also the complexity associated with the possession of forms or properties (cf. *TSB* 2.105; *TC* 3.166; and *TSch*. 2.65–66 and 2.71–72).

Thus, speaking of the divine properties, he says at one point: "I affirm that these properties are not other than God himself or the persons themselves" (*TC* 3.167). We have already seen that Abelard thinks the divine persons are essentially the same as the divine substance. Here, however, he goes further in two respects: first, by suggesting that the divine persons are also essentially the same as their properties (so that the Father is essentially the same as his fatherhood, the Son is essentially the same as is sonship, and likewise for the Holy Spirit and its procession); and second, by suggesting that the properties themselves are essentially the same as the divine substance.

Although Abelard sometimes articulates the doctrine of divine simplicity positively, saying that the divine properties are the same thing as God, he thinks the doctrine is stated most perspicuously in negative terms: "there are no forms or properties in God." Recognizing that authorities speak as if there were forms or properties in God, as well as his own tendency to slip into this way of speaking, Abelard cautions us against interpreting such language too literally:

Now when we hear "properties" being spoken of, it must not be thought that we have in mind any forms in God. Rather we speak of "properties" as though we are speaking of "what is proper [to something]" – just as Aristotle says that every substance has it in common *not to be in a subject, nor to admit of more or less, nor to have anything contrary to it*. Now Aristotle does not have any forms in mind when he assigns these common features. On the contrary, he assigns these common features for the sake of removing rather than introducing something. Thus, just as we say . . . that it is proper to a formless thing, such as God himself, not to have forms, or to a simple thing that it lack parts, and in this way seem to introduce no forms, but rather to accomplish the removal of all forms and parts completely (or if anyone also understands any forms by this way of speaking, it is certain that they are not things different in any way from the those substances in which they inhere), so also we say that one feature is proper to the Father, another to the Son, and yet another to the Holy Spirit. (*TC* 3.166)

In this passage, Abelard makes it clear that there are no forms or properties in God, and hence the term "properties" (*proprietates*), taken in its usual sense, cannot be applied to God. This by itself, however, is sufficient to show that the broadly Abelardian account developed earlier cannot be Abelard's. For if there are no forms or properties in God, then the divine persons cannot be literally distinguished in



property (since this sort of distinction literally applies only to compounds of matter and form, or subject and property).

In the foregoing passage we not only find evidence for how Abelard's account of the Trinity should *not* be understood, but also some indication of how it *should* be understood. The key to Abelard's final account lies in the distinction he draws between a thing's differing from another in property and a thing's differing from another in what is proper. Even though the divine persons do not differ from one another in property, according to Abelard, they do differ in an analogous way – namely, in what is proper to each. Judging from the comparison to Aristotle, Abelard intends these two modes of difference to be explained in terms of different types of predication. For example, when I truly predicate a *property* of a thing – say, a certain shape of a lump of wax – this predication requires the introduction of some positive feature or “form.” By contrast, Abelard suggests, when I truly predicate of something *what is proper* to it, the predication does not have this implication. This is especially clear, he suggests, in cases of the sort mentioned by Aristotle – that is, in cases where *what is proper* to a thing involves a privation or negation. For example, when I predicate *not being in a subject* of a substance, not only does my predication not imply the existence of a positive form or property (presumably, there are no such properties as *not being in a subject*), but it actually implies the non-existence or “removal” of a positive form or property (namely, *being in a subject* or *inherence*, which apparently *is* a positive form or property). Thus, things that differ in property differ with respect to positive forms or attributes, whereas things that differ in what is proper differ merely with respect to the predicates that apply to them.

Evidently, therefore, the distinction of the divine persons is to be understood not in terms of their possessing different forms or properties, but in terms of the different sorts of predicates that apply to them. Although differences in what is proper are marked by what predicates apply to a thing, and not by what forms or properties it has, it is important to recognize that this sort of difference is not be understood as a mere conceptual or verbal distinction. For in each case there will be a real difference grounding the application, or better the applicability, of the relevant predicates. This is especially clear in the case of the Trinity, as Abelard explains in the *Theologia “summi boni”*:

It is asked . . . whether the Trinity of persons in God should be understood verbally or in reality. For our part, we say that it should be understood in reality itself in such a way that from eternity that unique, entirely simple and individual thing, which is God, has been three persons . . . that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*TSB* 3.1; cf. also *TC* 4.1)

Again, in the *Theologia Christiana* he says:

It was not because a distinction of names was made that there is a Trinity, but rather because this Trinity has existed from eternity a distinction of names was made at some point in time. (*TC* 4.5)<sup>26</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that if we are to understand Abelard's own account of the Trinity, we must come to grips with its chief underlying assumption, namely, that there can be real distinction even without any distinction of forms or properties. Before examining this assumption in detail, however, we need to recognize a complication that it introduces into our discussion so far.

Up to now, we have been speaking of numerical sameness without identity as a relation that obtains only between things that differ in property. And this is because, until now, we have been operating on the assumption that numerical sameness, together with sameness of properties, is sufficient for identity. In terms of what Abelard says about difference in what is proper, however, we can now see that this is mistaken. For even though the divine persons are numerically the same and do not differ in property (since there are no properties in God by which they could differ), nonetheless Abelard wants to say that they are really distinct, inasmuch as they differ in what is proper to each. Evidently, therefore, Abelard thinks the relation of numerical sameness without identity can obtain even when its *relata* are the same in property (provided of course that they also differ in what is proper). The point of all this can perhaps best be made if we return to figure 1 and revise it in the way indicated at figure 2.

As figure 2 illustrates, our earlier attempt to associate numerical sameness without identity with the relation at (IB) was too quick. According to Abelard, this is *a* form of numerical sameness without identity, but it is not the *only* form, since the relation at (IA<sub>2</sub>) also qualifies as a form of numerical sameness without identity. For the same reason, our earlier attempt to associate the relation at (IA) with

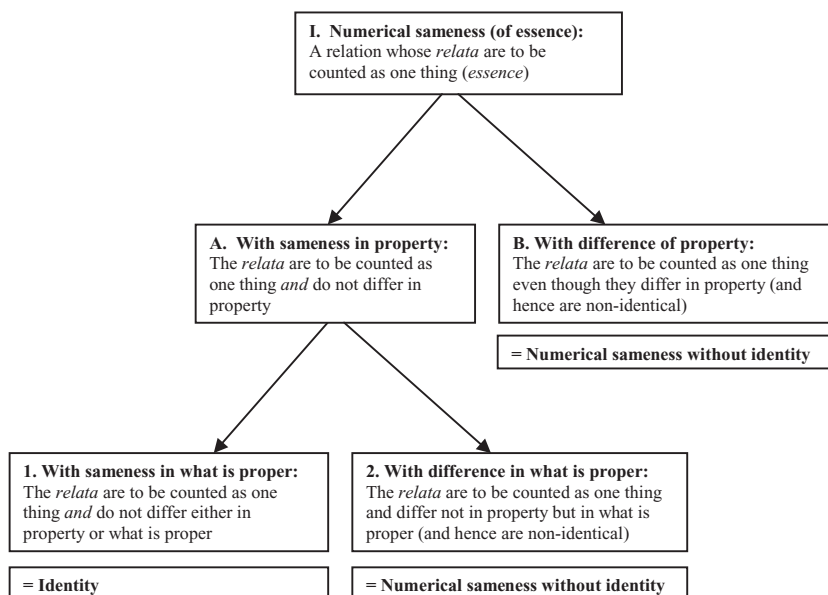


Figure 2

numerical sameness with identity – or just identity *simpliciter* – was too quick. According to Abelard, this relation is a genus with two species, only one of which qualifies as identity.

The coherence of Abelard's account of the Trinity, as well as these further distinctions, depends upon the coherence of saying that a real distinction can obtain between things that are numerically the same *and* identical in property. So far we have little to go on in understanding what such a distinction could amount to. In order to put ourselves in a position to evaluate Abelard's account of the Trinity, therefore, we need first to acquire a better understanding of this distinction and the justification for introducing it in the context of the Trinity. I shall undertake this project by examining in more detail Abelard's notion of difference in what is proper. I then return, in the final section of the paper, to assessing the overall coherence of his account.

### III.3 *Abelard's account of the Trinity*

As we have seen, the notion of difference in what is proper is closely related to that of difference in property – indeed, it is just

an analogical extension of it. Any clarification of difference in what is proper, therefore, must come by way of clarifying its analogue, difference in property. It turns out, however, that to understand what Abelard says about difference in property, we must consider his treatment of a closely related but more general notion, namely, difference in definition. For as we shall see, Abelard characterizes difference in property in terms of this latter sort of difference.

The following passage from the *Theologia Christiana* contains what is perhaps Abelard's clearest description of "difference in definition":

Things are different in definition when they cannot be terminated at the same definition associated with the meaning [of their terms] – that is, when they are not mutually requiring of one another, even though each is the same thing as the other, as in the case of a substance and a body, or a white thing and a hard thing. For something is not a body insofar as it is a substance, or a hard thing insofar as it is a white thing, since the one can exist without the other; nor does it require the other in virtue of itself. (*TC* 3.154; cf. also *TSB* 2.96–98, *TSch* 2.95–99, and *LNPS* 559.5–29)

According to Abelard, the characteristic feature of things that differ in definition is that they do not *require* one another. What Abelard has in mind by this characteristic can be made clearer by considering one of his examples. To say that a white thing and a hard thing do not require one another is just to say that a white thing is not required to be a hard thing insofar as it is white, and a hard thing is not required to be a white thing insofar as it is hard. From Abelard's use of "requires" in this and other contexts (most notably in his discussions of entailment<sup>27</sup>), it is clear that he intends to be making a point about the meanings of expressions. To say that a white thing is not required to be a hard thing is just to say that *being white* is no part of the meaning of the expression "hard thing." Things differing in definition, therefore, differ only insofar as they fall under descriptions – and a sufficient condition for their differing in this way is that their descriptions differ in meaning.<sup>28</sup> Thus, a white thing and a hard thing differ in definition because the descriptions "the white thing" and "the hard thing" differ in meaning. And the same account applies to the example of a substance and a body, and other such cases.<sup>29</sup> In general, therefore, we may characterize difference in definition as follows:

The *F* is *different in definition* from the *G* just in case the descriptions “the *F*” and “the *G*” are different in meaning (which, for Abelard, is equivalent to saying that the descriptions are associated with different concepts).

It is worth noting that as Abelard understands “difference in definition,” it is intended to apply only to the case of a single concrete individual. Hence, things that differ in definition are, for that very reason, the same in essence or number.<sup>30</sup> The same is true of the other forms of difference we shall be considering.

Now initially, it might be thought that the notion of “difference in property” is straightforwardly related to that of “difference in definition.” As we have seen, things differ in definition just in case they fall under different descriptions. Moreover, as Abelard recognizes, different descriptions often have different forms or properties associated with them. In light of this, it might be thought difference in definition *plus* different forms or properties (corresponding to the relevant descriptions) is all that is required for difference in property. In that case, we could say, in reference to a particular block of marble that is both white and hard, that the white thing differs in property from the hard thing. For the descriptions “the white thing” and “the hard thing” not only differ in meaning (and hence are different descriptions), but also have different forms or properties associated with them, namely, *whiteness* and *hardness*.

In fact, however, this is *not* what Abelard has in mind by “difference in property.” Abelard explicitly discusses the case of something white and hard, but only to show that, despite their difference in definition, the white thing and the hard thing are the *same in property*. And the reason for this, he says, is that their different properties are so “thoroughly mixed” (*permixtae*) that each of their subjects can be characterized by the property associated with the other:

One thing is said to be the *same in property* as another when the one participates in the property of the other, just as what is white [participates] in what is hard and what is hard [participates] in what is white. For something white participates in hardness, which is a property of what is hard – that is to say, something white is hard. And conversely something hard [participates in a property] of what is white. (TC 3.140)

As this passage makes clear, when Abelard says that something white is the same in property as something hard, this does not mean that whiteness and hardness are the same property. Rather, it just means

that the properties of whiteness and hardness “participate in one another” in the same subject – that is to say, whiteness can be attributed to the hard thing and hardness can be attributed to the white thing (as Abelard indicates by the fact that we can say “the white thing is hard” and the “the hard thing is white”). Thus, when Abelard says that the white thing and the hard thing are the same in property, what he means is that whiteness and hardness have the very same subject of possession.

Abelard’s discussion of the white and hard thing provides a clue to as to the proper understanding of difference in property. This form of difference requires not only a difference in definition *plus* different properties for different descriptions; it also requires that the properties in question be so “completely unmixed” (*penitus impermixtae*) that they have different subjects of possession.<sup>31</sup> This, I take it, is the point that Abelard is emphasizing in the discussion of the waxen image that we have already examined.<sup>32</sup> In this passage, it may be recalled, Abelard says that the wax (i.e., the matter of a form-matter composite) and the waxen image made from it (i.e., the form-matter composite itself) are different in property despite the fact that they are numerically the same thing. Moreover, he explains this difference by appealing to the fact that there is a property of the wax that cannot be attributed to the waxen image – namely, *being the wax from which something is made* – and conversely, that there is a property of the waxen image that cannot be attributed to the wax – namely, *being made from wax*. And this, I take it, is intended by Abelard to show that the subject of the first property is distinct from the subject of the second property, even if their subjects are the same in essence.<sup>33</sup>

In light of all this, we can see that, despite its misleading connotations, what Abelard calls *difference in property* involves not only different properties, but different properties that are related in such a way that they cannot be attributed to the same subject. If we keep this in mind, as well as Abelard’s view that whenever things differ in property they will also differ in definition, we may offer the following general characterization of difference in property:

The *F* is *different in property* from the *G* just in case (i) the *F* and the *G* are different in definition, (ii) *F-ness* and *G-ness* are distinct properties, and (iii) *F-ness* cannot be attributed to the *G* and *G-ness* cannot be attributed to the *F* at the same time and in the same respect.

With this characterization in hand, we are now finally in a position to return to the notion of difference in what is proper.

As we have seen, Abelard denies that the distinction of the divine persons can be understood literally in terms of the notion of difference in property, since there are no forms or properties in God. Strictly speaking, therefore, he says that the distinction of the divine persons must be understood on analogy with the notion of difference in property, and he introduces "difference in what is proper" to cover the relevant analogical extension. Now as far as I can tell, the only respect in which difference in what is proper is supposed to be unlike difference in property is in not requiring the existence of any forms of properties. Evidently, therefore, we can offer a general characterization of difference in what is proper by modifying our earlier definition of difference in property so as to remove the unwanted ontological commitment:

*What is proper to the F is different from what is proper to the G just in case (i) the F and the G are different in definition, (ii\*) "F" and "G" are different predicates, and (iii\*) "F" cannot be applied to the G and "G" cannot be applied to the F at the same time and in the same respect.*

The only difference between this definition and that of difference in property occurs in the second and third clauses (to which I have added asterisks, for the sake of emphasizing their difference). Thus, instead of speaking of different properties, *F-ness* and *G-ness*, this definition speaks of a different predicates, "*F*" and "*G*." And instead of speaking of the attribution of properties, it speaks of the attribution of predicates. Thus, whereas before we had unmixed properties that distinguish subjects of possession, here we have unmixed predicates that distinguish subjects of predication. In order to get a better idea of how this sort of difference is to be understood, let us consider how it applies to the case for which it was specifically introduced, namely, the case of the Trinity.

The God of Christianity, says Abelard, is an absolutely simple being, lacking any sort of metaphysical complexity whatsoever. Nonetheless, this being has existed from all eternity in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – from which it follows that there is something in extramental reality, namely, the simple divine substance, that from all eternity grounds the applicability of the predicates "father," "son," and "spirit." Insofar as the simple divine essence grounds the applicability of the first predicate, it is God the

Father, and insofar as it grounds the applicability of the second, it is God the Son, and likewise for God the Holy Spirit. If we allow ourselves to focus for the moment on the case of the Father and the Son, we can see how they differ in what is proper by seeing how they satisfy the three clauses of our definition.

To begin, it seems clear that the Father and Son differ in definition, and hence satisfy the first clause. For descriptions "the Father" and "the Son" clearly differ in meaning, and hence qualify as different descriptions. This last point, however, guarantees that the Father and the Son also satisfy the second clause of the definition. For presumably "the Father" and "the Son" are different descriptions just because "father" and "son" are different predicates. Finally, the relationship between the predicates "father" and "son" also seems to guarantee that the third clause of the definition will be satisfied. For "father" and "son" are relatively opposed – that is to say, they cannot be simultaneously applied to the same subject in relation to the same thing. This is not, of course, to deny that someone can be both a father and a son. Rather it is to deny that someone can be both a father and a son of the same thing.<sup>34</sup> According to Abelard, however, the simple divine substance is both a father and a son, but not a father and a son of something extrinsic to the divine substance. But, then, insofar as the simple divine substance is God the Father – that is, insofar as it is the subject of the predicate "father" – the predicate "son" cannot be applied to it, and likewise, insofar as the simple divine substance is God the Son – that is, insofar as it is subject of the predicate "son" – the predicate "father" cannot be applied to it. But if this is correct, then insofar as the simple divine substance satisfies the predicate "father," it (i.e., the Father) is a distinct subject of predication from the simple divine substance insofar as it satisfies the predicate "son" (i.e., the Son). Since in general a distinction qualifies as real, however, just in case it is not dependent on any activity of the mind, it would seem that the distinction between the Father and the Son is real. For as we have seen, Abelard assumes that the divine substance satisfies the predicates "father" and "son" by its very nature, quite apart from how we think or speak of it.

Assuming, therefore, that a similar story can be told about the Holy Spirit and the relationship of its distinctive predicate, "spirit," to "father" and "son," we would appear to have a real distinction among all the divine persons, despite their being numerically the



same simple divine substance. Indeed, since the type of distinction in question makes no appeal to forms or properties, we would appear to have a genuine case of a real distinction whose *relata* are not only numerically the same, but also the same in property. And of course, if this is correct, Abelard has a genuine solution to the logical problem of the Trinity.

By now it may be clear that Abelard's account of the Trinity parallels the broadly Aristotelian or material-constitution account of the Trinity developed earlier. Before turning to the evaluation of Abelard's account, therefore, it may be useful briefly to compare it to the earlier account, which may be summarized as follows:

*Material-constitution account of the Trinity*

- (MC<sub>1</sub>) Each of the divine persons is a "hylomorphic" compound consisting of the divine substance plus some further form or property (namely, *fatherhood*, *sonship*, or *procession*).
- (MC<sub>2</sub>) Each of the divine persons is numerically the same as the divine substance (since hylomorphic compounds are numerically the same as their constituent matter).
- (MC<sub>3</sub>) Each of the divine persons is a numerically distinct "hylomorphic" compound from each of the others (since the forms or properties of each are distinct, or as we might say now, *unmixed*).
- (MC<sub>4</sub>) Hence, there are three numerically distinct divine persons each of whom is numerically the same substance or God.

As in the case of the material-constitution account, Abelard's own account may be summarized in four claims:

*Abelard's account of the Trinity*

- (AB<sub>1</sub>) Each of the divine persons is the divine substance insofar as the divine substance satisfies each person's distinctive name or predicate (namely, "father," "son," or "spirit").
- (AB<sub>2</sub>) Each of the divine persons is numerically the same as the divine substance (obvious from [AB<sub>1</sub>]).
- (AB<sub>3</sub>) Each of the divine persons is a numerically distinct subject of predication from each of the others (since the predicates of each are unmixed).
- (AB<sub>4</sub>) Hence, there are three numerically distinct divine persons each of whom is numerically the same substance or God.

As we can see, the chief difference between these two accounts is that the first distinguishes the persons on the basis of unmixed properties, whereas the second distinguishes them on the basis of unmixed predicates. In fact, once this difference is taken into consideration, the other differences between the two accounts fall out fairly straightforwardly.

Having presented Abelard's account of the Trinity, and seen its relationship to the material-constitution account developed earlier, let us now turn to its evaluation.

#### IV. A LIMITED ASSESSMENT OF ABELARD'S ACCOUNT OF THE TRINITY

The main question for Abelard's account, as I see it, is whether it succeeds in providing us with three, really distinct divine persons. The account clearly presupposes the existence of a single (absolutely simple) divine being, and hence succeeds in upholding monotheism. But when it comes to the distinction of the persons, it is not so obviously successful. The simple divine substance, he tells us, is by its very nature a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is to say, in virtue of being what it is, the simple divine substance grounds the applicability of the unmixed predicates "father," "son," and "spirit." But why should we think this provides us with anything more than a mere conceptual or verbal distinction among the persons?

As we have seen, Abelard has an answer to this question. Because predicates such as "father" and "son" are "unmixed" – or as we might put it, because they are converse asymmetrical relational expressions – their subjects of predication must be distinct. Thus, assuming that the simple divine substance really does ground their applicability, we must distinguish the Father from the Son. For nothing can be its own father, just as nothing can be its own son. And yet since it is clear from scripture and tradition that each of the persons is divine, God cannot be regarded as Father or Son in relation to something extrinsic to the divine substance. Hence, if the simple divine substance satisfies the predicates "father" and "son," it must do so in such a way that, insofar as it satisfies the one, it cannot also satisfy the other, and vice versa. But this is just a way of saying that insofar as the divine substance is a Father (i.e., insofar as it is a subject of the predicate "father") it is not the Son (i.e., the simple

divine substance insofar as it is a subject of the predicate "son"). Of course this is not yet to say why the distinction in question is real. But here, too, Abelard has an explanation. According to him, the reality of the distinction owes to the fact that the applicability of the predicates "father" and "son" is grounded by the nature of the divine substance itself, not in the way we conceptualize or speak of it. But, then, if these two predicates are by their nature unmixed, and hence distinguish their subjects of predication, and yet the divine substance satisfies both of them by its very nature, it follows that the distinction must be real as opposed to being merely conceptual or verbal.

What all of this serves to emphasize is that the coherence of Abelard's account, and hence his solution to the logical problem of the Trinity, ultimately depends on the coherence of his assumption that the simple divine substance can ground the applicability of predicates such as "father" and "son." For once we grant this assumption, it would appear that Abelard is justified in concluding that there is a distinction among the persons that is both real and numerical. Now as far as I can tell, Abelard does not himself give us any compelling reason to accept this assumption, or even to think it is coherent. He does discuss the specific relations among the divine persons at length, but it is not clear that this discussion actually provides us with any reason for thinking that it is possible for an absolutely simple thing to serve as the subject of predicates of this sort.<sup>35</sup>

Ultimately, therefore, I think it must be said that Abelard's account of the Trinity is incomplete. Although it does not seem obviously incoherent, without further development and defense it cannot be regarded as successful in providing a genuine solution to the problem of the Trinity. This is not to say, of course, that Abelard's account is destined for failure, but only that, for all he has shown, it may yet fail.

Despite its incompleteness, I think there are at least two respects in which it must be granted that Abelard's account is successful. First of all, and perhaps most importantly, it is successful in carving out the dialectical space open to anyone constrained by both the Christian doctrine of the Trinity *and* the doctrine of divine simplicity. In fact, his discussion not only carves out the relevant dialectical space, but also indicates what may very well be the only possible strategy available for preserving a real distinction among the persons

without compromising the absolute simplicity of God. In this way, his discussion is also historically important, as it paves the way for later medieval developments. In fact, we can see the great philosophers and theologians of high and later Middle Ages, such as Thomas Aquinas, picking up precisely where Abelard's discussion leaves off, addressing themselves directly to such questions as whether it is possible for a single thing to ground the applicability of such "unmixed" predicates as "father" and "son," and introducing elaborate analogies to show that it is.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, Abelard's account is successful in steering a middle course between the twin heresies that threaten to afflict every account of the Trinity, tritheism and modalism. Abelard tells us in his autobiography that tritheism is among the charges brought against him at the Council of Soissons, where he was first condemned as a heretic – indeed that he narrowly escaped being stoned on the first day of his arrival at the council on the grounds that he had "preached and written (so the people had been told) that there are three Gods" (*HC* 83, Radice 1974, 79; cf. also *HC* 88, Radice 1974, 83). The details of Abelard's condemnations are complicated, and involve much more than just his solution to the logical problem of the Trinity.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, it seems clear from what we have seen that the charge of tritheism carries no weight. Indeed, if Abelard's views commit him to any form of heresy, it is much more likely to be modalism than tritheism, that is, the view that there are not three really distinct persons in God, but only one person. Even here, however, Abelard's account has the resources to resist the charge, inasmuch as it provides us with a principled reason for saying the divine persons are really distinct.<sup>38</sup>

In the end, therefore, it seems to me that Abelard must be credited with having developed a philosophically sophisticated and theologically interesting account of the Trinity, one that not only calls attention to the implications of standard medieval views about the Trinity, but also highlights the sort of work that must be done if such views are to be rendered ultimately defensible. Abelard's discussion helps us to appreciate, moreover, why it is so often the case that specifically theological considerations lead medievals to make their most important and original philosophical contributions. For apart from the difficulties associated with such theological doctrines as the

Trinity, one might never have the opportunity to develop the sorts of refinements that Abelard introduces in his discussion of identity and material objects.<sup>39</sup>

## NOTES

1. Marenbon 1997a, 58.
2. I follow the usual convention in Abelardian scholarship of translating *diversum* as “different” rather than “diverse.” This notion of difference, however, should not be confused with the technical Aristotelian notion of *difference*, which literally involves a *differentia* – that is, the property or feature that together with a genus constitutes a species.
3. In *TSB* 2.82–102, Abelard distinguishes six modes of sameness and difference (in essence, number, definition, likeness, change, and function). Much of this account is repeated in *TC* 3.138–164 with the addition of one further mode of sameness and difference (namely, in property). The account of sameness and difference in *TSch* 2.95–100 is deliberately simplified, and hence treats only four of the modes of identity (in essence, number, likeness, and “property or definition” – which is really an amalgam of each). Since the account in *TC* is the most complete, and clearly presupposed in *TSch*, I will often be relying on it in what follows for Abelard’s mature views about the proper resolution of logical problem of the Trinity. For Abelard’s discussion of sameness and difference outside these theological contexts, see *LNPS* 558.1–560.28.
4. *TSB* 2.103: “The persons – that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – are different from one another in a way analogous to those things that are *different in definition*.”
5. It is standard to translate *mucro* as “blade,” as I do here, but it is important to emphasize that Abelard uses the term as a synonym of “sword,” whereas in ordinary speech, a sword *has* a blade – that is, the blade is just one part of the sword, the hilt being the other part.
6. This description of essential sameness is derived nearly verbatim from *TSB* 2.83. But cf. also the discussion at *TSch* 2.95 and *LNPS* 558.15–17.
7. Cf. Jolivet 1975, 538–543; 1982, 293, n. 48. See also Kretzmann 1982, 497.
8. Hereafter I shall drop the qualification “in our sense” and simply use the term “identity” to refer to the relation of identity as we ordinarily understand it.
9. Abelard’s views about numerical sameness change over time. He always maintains that essential sameness entails numerical sameness, at least in respect of essence. In *Theologia “summi boni,”* however, he claims

that essential distinctness is compatible with sameness in number, as he thinks is clear from the case of parts and wholes: "it is necessary for all these things – namely, all those which are the same essentially – to be the same in number, but the converse is not true. For perhaps this hand is the same in number as this man of which it is a part, and no part is different in number from its whole. Nevertheless, a part is not essentially the same as a whole" (*TSB* 2.83). In later works, however, Abelard comes to deny that essential distinctness is compatible with numerical sameness, and to argue instead that parts are neither numerically the same or different from their wholes. Cf. especially *TC* 3.148–153.

10. For an excellent discussion of these examples, as well as their methodological importance for Abelard's thought, see Wilks 1998. As Wilks himself notes, the theoretical importance of these examples was first suggested by Tweedale 1976, 147–157 and briefly commented on by Normore 1987, 209–210 and 1992, 89–90. For some background on the use of these examples among Abelard's predecessors, see Constant Mews's editorial introduction to *TSch*, 207–209.
11. See, e.g., Abelard's account of universals in *LNPS* 522 and the account of good and evil in *Coll.* 128–129; cf. also the discussion of both in Wilks 1998.
12. The problem of material constitution has been widely discussed by contemporary philosophers, but until recently the theory proposed by Abelard has not been recognized among the candidates for a possible solution. In an important article, however, Michael Rea (1998) explicitly develops and defends the type of solution that I attribute to Abelard, and my own discussion is indebted to his. For the development and defense of other views that are in many ways similar to Abelard's, see also Paul 2002; Robinson 1985; Yablo 1987.
13. Rea 1998, 321–322.
14. It might seem somewhat odd to speak of matter as belonging to a kind – as if it were itself a kind of object. This way of speaking, however, is fairly well entrenched in Aristotelian metaphysics, and hence apparently just shows how differently contemporary and Aristotelian philosophers use the term "matter."
15. Strictly speaking, this follows only on the assumption that (a) there are such things as statues and lumps of bronze, and (b) that identity is necessary (i.e., that if  $a = b$ , then necessarily  $a = b$ ). One could, of course, deny either of these assumptions. But on the face of it, denying either of them seems just as implausible as allowing for co-located objects.
16. The lengths to which contemporary philosophers have gone to avoid collocationism testifies to just how implausible it can seem. Part of what makes the view implausible is that it is difficult to see how two material

objects, which are wholly co-located, and hence share exactly the same micro-physical structure, could differ in their persistence conditions. For a discussion of this, as well as other objections to co-locationsim, including the objection that it involves a needless multiplication of entities, see Merricks 2000, esp. 38–40 and 82–83.

17. Actually, if we say that *each* of the persons is a hylomorphic structure we will be committed to admitting four distinct kinds of object in the Trinity (the divine substance, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). It is not clear to me that this is a problem for Christian orthodoxy. But if one wants to preserve the existence of only three kinds of object in the Trinity, one can always identify one of the divine persons (say, the Father) with the divine substance and then construe each of the other two persons as “hylomorphic” structures. In fact, Abelard’s discussion of the generation of the Son encourages just this sort of view. The Father, he says, is power, whereas the Son is a certain kind of power – that is, power plus a certain differentia: “Just as . . . to be a man (i.e., a mortal rational animal) is to be a certain kind of animal, so also divine wisdom [i.e., the Son] is said to be of the substance of divine power [i.e., the Father], since to be wisdom (i.e., the power of discerning) is to be a certain kind of power” (*TSch* 2.116). Cf. also *TC* 4.87.
18. In the case of properties it is, perhaps, perfectly clear that they are not material objects, but the same should be clear even in the case of hylomorphic compounds. After all, we have seen that one material object can be comprised by two (or more) hylomorphic compounds – as in the case of Athena, which is comprised by a statue and a lump of bronze.
19. Swinburne 1988; cf. also Yandell 1994.
20. E.g. C. Plantinga 1988.
21. See Geach and Amscombe 1963, 118–120. For further development and defense of the “relative identity” approach to the Trinity, cf. Martinich 1978; van Inwagen 1988.
22. I have defended this claim at more length in Brower forthcoming.
23. van Inwagen 1988, esp. 248–260.
24. Cf. van Inwagen 1998.
25. For further development and defense of the material-constitution account of the Trinity, see Brower and Rea forthcoming.
26. This passage and the last are both cited in Marenbon 1997a, 154.
27. See, e.g., *Dial.* 284. For detailed discussion of this aspect of Abelard’s views, see Martin 1987a, 1992a; and chapter 5 of this volume. Cf. also Stump 1989, 87–109 and Marenbon 1997a, 44–45.
28. It is clear, therefore, that Abelard is using the term ‘definition’ in a deliberately broad sense, which extends beyond the strict Aristotelian sense requiring a genus and specific difference.

29. This explains why Abelard suggests at one point that only “univocals” can be the same in definition. Cf. *TSch* 2.95.
30. This fact helps to explain why, in his earliest discussions of the Trinity, Abelard thought that the distinction of the divine persons could aptly be characterized in terms of this mode of difference. By the time of the *Theologia Christiana*, however, he came to think that difference in definition was not fine-grained enough to capture the distinction of the divine persons, and hence introduced the notion of difference in property (and its analogical extension, difference in what is proper).
31. Abelard comes close to putting the requirement in just this way at *TC* 3.186, where he is discussing the distinction of the divine persons: “It is clear that the distinction of the persons consists not only in the distinction of their definitions and properties, but also in the exclusion of their predication from one another (*in remotione praedicationis ipsarum ab invicem*), since one of the persons is no way another.”
32. See *TC* 3.140, discussed in §11.1 above.
33. It is significant, therefore, that at one point in this passage Abelard speaks of the things differing in property as things “distinguished by their properties” (*proprietas suis distinguuntur*). See *TC* 3.140.
34. “Father” and “son” are what we would nowadays call converse, asymmetrical expressions – which is just to say that if *a* is father of *b*, then *b* cannot be father of *a*, but must instead be son of *a*, and conversely, if *b* is son of *a*, then *a* cannot be *b*’s son, but must instead be *b*’s father.
35. In support of this assumption, Abelard could, of course, appeal to scripture and tradition, which certainly refer to God as both “father” and “son.” But while this would provide him with reason to suppose that a single thing (namely, God) can ground the applicability of predicates “father” and “son,” it would do nothing to show that *an absolutely simple thing* can ground their applicability – at least without some further argument for the claim that scripture and tradition also support the doctrine of divine simplicity as he understands it.
36. See, e.g., Aquinas’s discussion in *ST* 1.27–30.
37. At the Council of Sens, where Abelard was condemned for a second time, nineteen heretical propositions or *capitula* were imputed to him, only five of which deal directly with Trinitarian issues. For a discussion of these propositions, see Luscombe 1969.
38. Even if Abelard’s account could not resist the charge of modalism, however, it is hard to see how this would render it any worse off than that of most other medievals who also accept divine simplicity.



39. I read earlier versions of this chapter to the 2001 Cornell Summer Colloquium in Medieval Philosophy and to the Philosophy Department at Purdue University. I am grateful to the audiences on those occasions for stimulating comments and discussion. I am also grateful to Michael Bergmann, Martin Curd, Kevin Guilfooy, Patrick Kain, Peter King, Eleonora Lorenzetti, John Marenbon, Michael Rea, Eleonore Stump, and especially Susan Brower-Toland for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

## 8 Sin, grace, and redemption

“From time to time some of my friends startle me by referring to the Atonement itself as a revolting heresy,” wrote Austin Farrer, “invented by the twelfth century and exploded by the twentieth. Yet the word is in the Bible.”<sup>1</sup> Farrer is referring to Romans 5:11 in the Authorized Version: “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” Here the word “atonement” – literally, the state of being “at one” – translates the Greek *katallagē*, which means “reconciliation.” The doctrine of the Atonement, then, is in its essentials the claim that the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ effects a reconciliation between God and human beings, who had been – and apart from Christ’s gracious action would have remained – estranged on account of human sin. And that doctrine, far from being a twelfth-century innovation, is a prominent theme of the Pauline epistles and a matter of theological consensus from the earliest days of Christian thought.

One must distinguish, however, between the *doctrine* of the Atonement and *theories* of the Atonement. Where the doctrine simply states that the Passion of Christ effects a reconciliation between God and human beings, theories of the Atonement try to explain *how* the Passion has such an effect. Various theories of the Atonement have been put forward, and none has ever received the kind of broad and enduring support that would entitle it to be regarded as *the* orthodox view. Nevertheless, some theories have better credentials than others, and Abelard got himself in trouble by revising or denying some well-credentialed twelfth-century views and – according to his detractors, at least – embracing a most unsatisfactory alternative.

The best place to look for Abelard's theory of the Atonement is in his *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. The Commentary consists of verse-by-verse exposition of the literal sense of Romans, with frequent excursions or *quaestiones* on theological or exegetical issues raised by the text.<sup>2</sup> (The only formal division of the Commentary is into a prologue and four "books," but as Buytaert rightly notes, "The division into Books is rather artificial."<sup>3</sup>) The *quaestio* on the Atonement, found early in Book II, has been the target of both scholarly study and theological polemic ever since Bernard of Clairvaux's energetic propaganda war against Abelard. In his *Letter to Pope Innocent Concerning Certain Heresies of Peter Abelard*, Bernard charged Abelard with exemplarism and Pelagianism. By "exemplarism" I mean the view that the Passion has redemptive efficacy only as an unparalleled example of divine love. There is no "objective transaction" in the Atonement (as Swinburne calls it): no penal substitution, in which Christ undergoes on our behalf the punishment for our sins, no payment of a ransom to deliver us from the power of the devil, but simply a manifestation of divine love that awakens an answering love in the believer.<sup>4</sup> By "Pelagianism" I mean the view that human beings do not need divine grace in order to act rightly. Bernard argues that Pelagianism follows from exemplarism. If our redemption consists in some change of heart brought on by our response to Christ's loving example, then it is we who accomplish our own redemption. Abelard, according to Bernard, "makes the glory of our redemption and the pinnacle of our salvation consist, not in the power of the Cross or the price of Christ's blood, but in the improvement of our own way of life (*in nostrae . . . conversationis profectibus*)."<sup>5</sup>

Bernard, as Philip Quinn dryly noted, "was far from being a fair-minded philosophical critic,"<sup>6</sup> and his recounting of Abelard's views is full of the pervasive misunderstandings of one who has been blinded by partisanship. But if Bernard was led astray because he was too keen on condemning Abelard as a heretic, other readers have been misled because they were too keen on commending Abelard as a hero. For example, Hastings Rashdall praised Abelard lavishly for at last stating the doctrine of the Atonement "in a way which had nothing unintelligible, arbitrary, illogical, or immoral about it"<sup>7</sup> – precisely because Abelard was an exemplarist and eschewed such bizarre notions as penal substitution and the ransom paid to the devil. In a

different vein, Richard Weingart argued at length that Abelard's theory is orthodox, multifaceted, and eminently defensible;<sup>8</sup> but John Marenbon is surely correct to warn that Weingart's "book must be read with caution, since the author's desire to make Abelard's thought conform with what he takes to be orthodoxy sometimes leads him to distort it."<sup>9</sup>

No such polemical intent, whether of friend or foe, mars Quinn's sober and illuminating discussion. Quinn argues that "the transformative power of divine love"<sup>10</sup> is the central but not the only motif in Abelard's account, and he denies that Abelard is a Pelagian.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, Quinn focuses on the short *quaestio* on the Atonement and gives little attention to the Romans Commentary as a whole. In this chapter I wish to preserve Quinn's fair-mindedness while broadening the scope of the discussion to include the Romans Commentary as a whole. By doing so I hope not only to offer a more complete account of Abelard's theory of the Atonement but also to show how that theory is connected to Abelard's understanding of both original sin and divine grace. It will soon become clear that Abelard is not an exemplarist of the sort that Bernard deplored and Rashdall praised. Abelard does acknowledge an "objective transaction" in the death of Christ. In order to explain what that transaction is, and why it is needed, I look at Abelard's account of the dominion of sin over fallen human beings. This dominion has both an objective and a subjective aspect. The objective dominion of sin is our being liable to the *punishment* of sin; in the Passion Christ delivers us from the objective dominion of sin by taking that punishment on our behalf. The subjective dominion of sin is our strong inclination to obey our disordered desires; in the Passion Christ delivers us from the subjective dominion of sin by inspiring us with the love of God. As I will show, however, this subjective transformation raises a difficult question about the nature of divine grace. In the end, it is not Abelard's supposed exemplarism but his unusual account of grace that might justify calling him a Pelagian.

## I. TWO MAJOR THEMES OF THE ROMANS COMMENTARY

The Romans Commentary has two overarching themes. The first is the exaltation of divine grace at the expense of human merit, as Abelard announces in his Prologue to the work:

The intention of [the epistle to the Romans] is to call back to true humility and brotherly harmony the Roman converts from among both Jews and Gentiles, who were claiming superiority over each other in prideful contentiousness. Now it does this . . . by both magnifying the gifts of divine grace and minimizing the merits of our own deeds, so that no one will presume to boast of his own deeds but will attribute whatever ability he has to divine grace, recognizing that he has received from divine grace whatever good he has . . . The manner of treating that subject matter consists, as has been said, in minimizing our works and magnifying grace, so that no one will presume to boast of his own works, but rather "let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (*Comm. Rom.* 43)<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the *Commentary* Abelard takes every opportunity to remind the reader that we owe every good thing to divine grace and can claim nothing on our own merits. Now it would be odd, to say the least, if a work whose announced purpose was to extol divine grace and depreciate human merit should turn out to be Pelagian.

The second main theme of the *Commentary* is that we are meant to serve God out of love rather than out of fear (*amore potius quam timore*).<sup>13</sup> To be righteous is simply to love God for his own sake and to act rightly out of love for him. This love is of course called "charity," and Abelard frequently *identifies* justice (or righteousness) with charity – not only in human beings but even in God. God's justice is taken to be his drive to justify, rather than his drive to punish; and since we are justified on account of charity (God's own charity kindling charity within us), it seems natural for Abelard to speak of God's justice and his charity as equivalent. Thus when Paul describes God as "just and justifying," Abelard glosses "just in his will and justifying through his action" (*Comm. Rom.* 113). God is "just in his will" because he has perfect charity towards us; he is "justifying through his action" because he creates charity in us, thereby making us just, that is, righteous.

## II. THE OBJECTIVE TRANSACTION

The first theme suggests that human redemption is entirely God's doing; it is nothing of which we can boast. The second theme suggests that what God does is to enkindle supernatural charity by which we serve God out of love for himself and not out of fear. What sort of theory of the Atonement will fit these themes best? I think we can

see pretty clearly that an exemplarist theory would not be a good fit at all, at least if we assume that God's redemptive action is to be found in the Passion of Christ. For unless the Passion actually accomplishes something, unless there is an "objective transaction" made in and through the death of Christ, there is nothing about the Passion to inspire our love: pity, perhaps, or sympathy, but not love or gratitude. Loving Christ because of what he did for us on the Cross makes sense only if he in fact did something for us on the Cross. And whatever that was, it had to be something Christ *intended* to accomplish in his Passion. Otherwise the connection between his Passion and our redemption would be merely accidental, and it would be incongruous to feel gratitude and love toward Christ on account of his death. We might of course be very glad the Passion had taken place, and we might properly feel gratitude and love toward whoever gave the Passion a redemptive efficacy Christ had not intended; but there would be no sense in loving Christ because he died for us, precisely because, *ex hypothesi*, he didn't in fact die *for us* at all.

Here's another way of putting the same argument. On an exemplarist theory, the Passion works for our redemption only by presenting an extraordinary example of love that inspires an answering love in our hearts. But the Passion is not an example of love at all if Christ was not in some way acting for our benefit by allowing himself to be delivered up unto death. So exemplarism turns out to be incoherent. Only if there is an objective transaction can there be the subjective transformation.

So the two main themes of the Romans Commentary, taken together, should make us expect Abelard to acknowledge some objective benefit that accrues to us in virtue of the Passion of Christ: a benefit we could not attain for ourselves (so that we have no ground for boasting) but that God in Christ won for us in his Passion (so that he kindles in us the true love of God that enables us to serve God in the right way, thereby making us righteous). That benefit is deliverance from the power of sin. Expounding Romans 7:14, Abelard writes:

BUT I AM CARNAL: that is, I am given to carnal pleasures and earthly longings. Indeed, I am so carnal that I AM SOLD INTO BONDAGE TO SINS: that is, I subject myself freely to sin and its slavery for a payoff in earthly goods, exercising every concupiscence in order to acquire and attain them.

Or at any rate I was sold into bondage to sin in and with our first parents on account of the delight and tasting of the apple that Eve desired (*concupivit*). That's how we were made captives. We had the power to sell ourselves into slavery, but we do not have the power to buy ourselves back. Innocent blood was given for us. Nor can we free ourselves from the dominion of sin by our own powers, but only by the grace of the Redeemer. (*Comm. Rom.* 205)

Note the commercial language. Earthly goods are the payoff (the *pretium*) we received for selling ourselves into slavery; but having sold ourselves, we can no longer buy ourselves back. The context ensures that we take "redeem" in its most literal sense, "to buy back"; Christ is our Redeemer, the one who buys us back. The price he paid was his blood – in other words, his life. One could hardly ask for a clearer affirmation of an "objective transaction."

Of course, some of the metaphors in which Abelard affirms this transaction require comment. I want to look at two in particular. First, in what sense are we "taken captive"? Earlier writers had talked about a ransom paid to the devil.<sup>14</sup> Does Abelard here mean to affirm that the devil had us in captivity, and that the price of Christ's blood was paid to the devil? And second, what is the "dominion of sin" from which we are set free? Abelard's understanding of the power that sin has over us will be crucial to understanding what he thinks Christ accomplished for us on the Cross.

### III. THE POWER OF THE DEVIL

Let's look first at what Abelard has to say about our being captives. Abelard has nothing but scorn for the notion that the devil somehow acquired rights over human beings, and that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the devil to release us from captivity. He writes:

If a slave should will to desert his master and place himself under another's control, would he be so much within his rights to act in this way that his master, if he so chose, could not lawfully track down the slave and bring him back? And who would doubt that if some master's slave uses persuasion to seduce a fellow slave and make him stray from obedience to his rightful master, the seducer is accounted much more guilty in the eyes of the master than is the one seduced? And how unjust for someone who has seduced another to earn thereby some privilege or power over the one he seduced! Even if he formerly had some rights over him, has he not earned the loss of those rights on account of the wickedness of his seduction? . . . If either

of these slaves should be placed above the other or receive power over the other . . . it would be more conformable to reason that the one who was seduced should exact vengeance on the one who harmed him by seducing him. (*Comm. Rom.* 114–115)

On the strength of this analogy and a few other arguments, Abelard concludes that the devil did not acquire any rights over human beings simply because he successfully tempted them to disobey God. God may have given the devil permission to torture human beings as punishment for their sins, but the devil is only a jailer or licensed tormentor; he has no actual right over us, and God can withdraw us from the devil's power at any time without doing the devil any injury at all.

Moreover, Abelard argues, we know that God can keep a human being free of sin from birth, since he did so for Jesus. If he can do that for one person, he can do it for everyone. And if everyone were free of sin, then no one would need punishment, and so there would be no reason for the devil to have license to torment anyone at all. So there was no need for the Passion in order to free us from the power of the devil, since "the divine mercy had the power to free human beings from the devil's power by its mere say-so" (*Comm. Rom.* 116).

But if we were not captives of the devil, then to whom was the price of Christ's blood paid? Abelard asks:

To whom was the price of blood paid so that we might be bought back, if not to him in whose power we were – i.e., as has been said, to God himself, who had entrusted us to his tormentor? For it is not tormentors but their masters who collect or receive the price for captives. And in what way did he release those captives on payment of that price, given that he himself previously demanded or instituted that price for the release of his captives? But how cruel and wicked it seems for someone to require the blood of an innocent man as a price. (*Comm. Rom.* 117)

Abelard is not merely saying that it would be wicked for God to demand the blood of his innocent Son as the price for release of human captives. He is saying that the notion of a price for release of captives is *incoherent*. Human beings were not under the devil's power, but under God's power. And the notion that God demanded payment from himself, having arbitrarily set the price at the death of his Son, is absurd.



## IV. THE DOMINION OF SIN

IV.1 *Objective dominion: punishment*

So although Abelard is willing to use the metaphor of captivity, he rejects the notion that the Passion was a ransom paid to buy sinful human beings back from the devil. Instead, he seems to take that metaphor as equivalent to the other metaphor I wished to explore, namely, that of the dominion of sin. What I hope to show is that for Abelard, sin has both an objective and a subjective dominion over us. The objective dominion of sin is our being liable to the punishment for sin, namely, eternal damnation; the Passion releases us from that dominion by way of the objective transaction that, as I have already argued, Abelard must in consistency affirm. The subjective dominion of sin is our inability to withstand the power of concupiscence; the Passion releases us from that dominion by way of the subjective transformation that the exemplarist reading of Abelard has taken as central.

The only sustained attention to the dominion of sin comes in a *quaestio* on original sin found in Book II of the Romans Commentary, well after the *quaestio* on Atonement. Abelard notes that scripture uses the word "sin" in a variety of senses. In the strict sense, "sin" means actual contempt for God, which is what makes us guilty before God. In a second sense, however, "sin" means the punishment to which we are liable on account of sin in the first sense. Yet a third sense is involved when Paul says that Christ became sin for us; here "sin" means a sacrifice for sin (*Comm. Rom.* 164).

When we speak of original sin, we are speaking of sin in the second sense. All human beings are conceived and born in a state of sin in the sense that we are all subject to the punishment for the sin (in the first and strictest sense) of our first parents. Now there is a serious question about how it can be just for God to inflict on us a punishment for something we didn't do, and Abelard discusses the matter at great length. Fortunately that discussion is not relevant for our purposes. What matters for us is that when we say that Christ bore our sins on the Cross, we are talking about sin in the second sense; Christ bore the *punishment* for our sins so that we don't have to. As a result our sins are "dismissed"; that is, the punishment to which we would otherwise have been subject is canceled. As Abelard says at the end

of the *quaestio* on original sin, "God's forgiving (*condonare*) sin is nothing other than his remitting its eternal punishment" (*Comm. Rom.* 174).<sup>15</sup>

So Abelard says here that apart from the redemptive work of Christ, we are all liable to punishment for sin, and that Christ himself bore that punishment on our behalf. In other words, Abelard explicitly teaches a theory of penal substitution. This point requires some dilation, since even commentators like Quinn who acknowledge it tend to underplay its importance. Abelard teaches substitutionary atonement in at least two other passages in the Commentary. The first is part of the exposition of Romans 4:25, where Paul says that Christ "was handed over on account of our sins." Abelard comments, "There are two ways in which Christ is said to have died ON ACCOUNT OF OUR SINS. First, the transgressions on account of which he died were ours, and we committed the sin whose punishment he bore. And second, by dying he took away our sins: that is, he removed the punishment for our sins at the cost of his death" (*Comm. Rom.* 153).

The second passage is part of the exposition of Romans 8:3, where Paul says, "God [sent] his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh;<sup>16</sup> and from sin he destroyed sin in the flesh." Abelard comments:

[Paul] explains the way in which we are freed from sin in Christ. For GOD the Father, i.e., the majesty of divine power, sent HIS SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH: that is, he caused that Wisdom which is coeternal with himself to be brought so low as to assume a passible and mortal human nature, so that through the punishment for sin to which he was subject, he might himself seem to have sinful flesh, that is, flesh conceived in sin. AND FROM SIN, that is, from the punishment for sin that he bore for us in the flesh – in the humanity he had assumed, and not according to his divinity – HE DESTROYED SIN, i.e., he took away from us the punishment for sin by which even the righteous were bound before, and he opened the gates of heaven. (*Comm. Rom.* 211)

Abelard's ideas on penal substitution are admittedly sketchy. In each of these passages Abelard says that Christ bore the punishment for our sins, language that suggests at least two things: first, that what Christ suffered on the Cross is a penalty of the same kind as that to which sinful human beings are liable; and second, that since

Christ undertook to suffer on our behalf, we are no longer subject to that penalty. Ordinarily when Abelard talks about the penalty for sin, he means eternal death, or in other words, damnation.<sup>17</sup> But Christ didn't undergo eternal death. What he did undergo was physical death, which Abelard seems also to have regarded as a punishment for sin;<sup>18</sup> but obviously even Christians are subject to physical death. So I don't see any straightforward sense in which Abelard can hold that Christ bore the punishment for our sins. That somehow Christ's temporal and physical death frees us from eternal and spiritual death, Abelard has no doubt; but he nowhere seeks to explain how such a thing happens.

#### IV.2 *Subjective dominion: concupiscence*

Abelard emphasizes the objective side of the dominion of sin: "the debt of damnation by which we are bound, since we are made liable to eternal punishment" (*Comm. Rom.* 171). But there is a subjective side as well. Our desires are disordered by sin, so that we cannot effectively will what we know is good. The Passion somehow sets us free, so that we no longer have to obey the promptings of concupiscence.

The connection between original sin and the dominion of concupiscence is more oblique than one might suppose. Besides making us liable to eternal punishment, the sin of our first parents also brought hardship in this present life. In Romans 7:8 Paul refers to this temporal affliction itself as sin and remarks that "SIN, i.e., the punishment and affliction of this temporal life that we endure because of the fault of our first parents, HAS WORKED IN USEVERY CONCUPISCENCE – concupiscence, that is, of all earthly goods, so that through an abundance of them we might evade every anxiety of our present distresses" (*Comm. Rom.* 197). The Old Law actually excited this concupiscence, because it promised these earthly goods as a reward for obedience. Paul says that "Before the Law, sin was dead," meaning that the *fomes*<sup>19</sup> of sin had less power to arouse concupiscence. But after the Law had been given, we could have some confidence that we would obtain the goods we desired, and so concupiscence was inflamed (*Comm. Rom.* 110).

Thus, it is not original sin alone that enslaves us to sinful desire. Because of original sin, we are subject to temporal misfortune

as well as eternal damnation. The hardships of this present life in turn incline us to look for security in worldly goods, and the Law, by promising us such goods, makes our desire for them all the more fervent. Now this sinful desire does not blot out our knowledge of what is good, as Abelard makes very clear. In fact, we do not merely recognize the goodness of what the Law enjoins; we want to do what it commands: "By the very fact that I want to do and to desire rationally (*per rationem appetere*) what it commands, I genuinely recognize that the law is good in its commandments" (*Comm. Rom.* 208). But "I am burdened by the yoke of depraved habit that frustrates this good will" (*Comm. Rom.* 209).

Abelard expresses this view most clearly in commenting on Romans 7:22–23, where Paul says, "For I delight in the law according to the inner man, but I find another law in my members, at odds with the law of my mind." Abelard comments:

Since he has said that he wills to do the good that the law commands and yet doesn't do it, he explains how both these things come about. He says that he delights IN THE LAW ACCORDING TO THE INNER MAN, i.e., that what the law commands pleases him, and that he desires it through reason. Here he calls reason "the inner man," the spiritual and invisible image of God in which man was made according to his soul when he was created rational and thereby placed above the other creatures. And again he says he sees ANOTHER LAW IN HIS MEMBERS: that is, he recognizes that the *fomes* of sin and the goads (*stimulos*) of concupiscence, which because of the weakness of the flesh he obeys like a law, reign IN THE MEMBERS of his body and have dominion over him. . . . I say that this LAW of concupiscence is AT ODDS WITH, i.e., contrary to, the natural LAW OF MY MIND, i.e., reason, which ought to rule me as a law. Indeed, through reason I desire good, but through concupiscence I desire evil. (*Comm. Rom.* 209)

Abelard never suggests that our inherited sinfulness clouds our discernment of good and evil, but it makes us prisoners of concupiscence and turns us away from God,<sup>20</sup> so that we are powerless to act as reason dictates.

This powerlessness to carry out the good actions that the law prescribes and conscience approves is what prompts Paul to exclaim, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" His answer, of course, is "The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But how does that grace work? Abelard's answer is instructive:

[Paul] has said that THE GRACE OF GOD WILL DELIVER him THROUGH CHRIST. Now [in Romans 8:2] he explains how this happens. The LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE, that is, the law of charity and of divine love rather than fear (as the Old Law was) IN CHRIST JESUS, i.e., given and offered to us through him, HAS DELIVERED ME FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND therefore OF DEATH, i.e., from the commandments or blandishments of carnal concupiscence, lest I obey them by consenting to them. (*Comm. Rom.* 210–211)

What frees us from obedience to concupiscence, Abelard says here, is the love of God that is “given and offered to us through” Jesus. Because of that love, we need neither disobey the law because of concupiscence nor obey it merely out of fear; we can do God’s will out of love for God. “Perfect love casts out fear,” and it casts out concupiscence as well. And that perfect love is in some way given to us through or by the Passion.

But in what way? Is there something supernatural about the way in which the Passion creates love in us, or does our justification – our being made righteous through charity – work in a more or less natural way, by inspiring our gratitude and love in the same way as (though presumably to a greater degree than) a human benefactor’s kindness would inspire our gratitude and love? If grace works only in the latter way, there might be something to be said for Bernard’s complaint that Abelard is a crypto-Pelagian. For it would seem that our redemption is accomplished, not by “the power of the Cross or the price of Christ’s blood,” but by our own change of heart. So in order to complete our picture of the process of redemption in Abelard, we need to look more closely at Abelard’s understanding of grace: what it is, how it works, and to what extent its efficacy depends on human cooperation or even human initiative.

## V. GRACE

### V.1 *The explicit account*

Now if we define Pelagianism as the view that it is possible for human beings to act rightly even without divine grace, Abelard is clearly not a Pelagian. He repeatedly states that no one acts well apart from grace. It is precisely this conviction that makes him puzzle at length over the text “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have

I hated," which Paul quotes from Malachi 1:2–3. Paul himself continues, "What shall we say then? Is there iniquity in God?" (Romans 9:14). Abelard comments:

The Apostle appropriately raises an objection on the basis of the preceding words. It is, as it were, an accusation and indictment of God, who, by not predestining Esau, judged him worthy of hate even before he was able to merit anything, and withheld from him such grace as he gave the other brother, when his brother likewise had not previously merited anything. As everyone agrees, he was unable to act rightly, since that grace was withheld from him; and so it does not seem to be Esau's fault that he was wicked so much as God's, since God was unwilling to give him the grace by which he would have been able to act rightly. (*Comm. Rom.* 235)

Clearly the difficulty that Abelard states here is one that arises precisely because he thinks grace is necessary for right action. Never one to shirk a difficulty, he drives the point home for another couple of pages. He concludes the statement of the objection by pointing out that God is said have to mercy on whom he wills and to harden the hearts of whom he wills:

In other words, it is on account of God's will and choice rather than their own merits that human beings are either saved because of God's mercy or damned because of God's hardening them in their sins, a hardening that God himself brings about by not having mercy on them. The upshot, it seems, is that the salvation or damnation of human beings is to be attributed entirely to divine choice. (*Comm. Rom.* 237)

His first attempt to defend God against the charge of arbitrary favoritism depends on the claim that God can treat human beings however he pleases without doing them any injustice.<sup>21</sup> If the potter (who merely rearranges pre-existing stuff) has rights over the clay, so that he can legitimately make both an honorable and a contemptible vessel out of the same lump of clay, then surely God (who creates even the very stuff of which we are made) has rights over us, so that he can legitimately make both saints and sinners out of his human creatures. Abelard tries to take some of the sting out of this line of argument by pointing out that God can make the best possible use even out of wickedness – as witness the use he made of the treachery of Judas. Moreover, God always has some reason for whatever he does or permits, even if that reason is "hidden from us and past finding out" (*Comm. Rom.* 240).

Fortunately, Abelard recognizes that even if these considerations answer the charge of arbitrary favoritism, they leave God vulnerable to accusations of injustice on other grounds:

Even if God cannot be charged with injustice because he does not will to give his grace to some, I still think it's a legitimate question how wicked human beings, to whom God did not will to give grace so that they might be saved, are responsible for being damned, so that they are said to be damned BY THEIR OWN FAULT. On the other hand, if it is no fault of their own, by what merit of theirs are they said to be damned by God, "who repays each according to his deeds"? But, once again, if someone is not saved, what fault is it of his, since God never willed to give him the grace by which he might be saved, and he could not be saved without it? (*Comm. Rom.* 240)

One might say that God does indeed offer grace to saints and sinners alike, but sinners reject it. But this suggestion doesn't really help, Abelard says, because one needs divine grace even to accept divine grace. If God didn't offer sinners the grace they needed in order to accept his saving grace, it isn't their fault that they aren't saved. In such a case, Abelard says, God would be like a doctor who brings in the medicine that would cure a desperately ill patient who is too weak to sit up on his own and take the pill. If the doctor doesn't help the patient sit up and take the medicine, it is hardly the patient's fault that he isn't cured, and the doctor deserves no praise for bringing in the medicine if he does not take the necessary steps to ensure that it effects a cure (*Comm. Rom.* 240).

And here Abelard's discussion suddenly takes off in a new direction. He continues, "And so we say that it is not necessary for God to offer us new grace for each good work, so that there's no way we can do or will good without a new gift of divine grace beforehand" (*Comm. Rom.* 240–241). It's the "and so" (*itaque*) that is puzzling. How does the doctor analogy suggest the conclusion that a single gift of grace is enough to carry us along for multiple good works? The doctor analogy is about our powerlessness to receive divine grace on our own; Abelard's conclusion is that once we have received grace, we don't exhaust its efficacy in a single good work. The conclusion seems at first glance to be a non-sequitur.<sup>22</sup>

I will return to this textual difficulty in a moment, but for now let's continue with the discussion of God's offer of grace. Abelard claims that "what happens with true and eternal goods is like what

happens with the love or desire of temporal goods" (*Comm. Rom.* 241). Imagine that some bigwig (*praepotens*) offers some of his riches to a couple of needy people in the marketplace, on the condition that they carry out some orders of his. One of them, "set on fire"<sup>23</sup> with desire for the reward that has been offered and promised to him, throws himself into the work and gets it done" (*Comm. Rom.* 241). The other, however, is indolent and can't stand hard work: the more daunting the work, the less fired up he is about the reward. Why is it, Abelard asks, that one gets down to work and the other prefers to remain idle, even though each is offered the same reward? There is no reason but "the goodness of the one and the idleness of the other" (*Comm. Rom.* 241). The rich man has done no more for one than for the other; that his equal actions have unequal results is attributable entirely to the difference between the two poor men.

In the same way God makes us a daily offer of his heavenly kingdom. He does everything he can to arouse our desire for the happiness of that kingdom by setting it before us and promising it to us (*exponendo et promittendo*). "For," as Abelard assures us, "the greater someone understands a reward to be, the more he is naturally drawn to it by his own desire, especially when all that is needed to obtain it is the will, and it can be achieved by everyone with much less cost in effort or danger than is needed to acquire earthly kingdoms" (*Comm. Rom.* 241–242).

Thus, Abelard says that the only grace God needs to provide beforehand is to reveal – and to see to it that we believe in – the happiness that he has promised and the means by which we can attain it. "But this grace," he says, "God offers equally to the reprobate and the elect, in that he instructs both equally to this end, so that from the same grace of faith that they have got hold of, one person is incited to good works and another is rendered inexcusable by his negligent sloth" (*Comm. Rom.* 242). Notice that Abelard assumes here that the reprobate and the elect both have faith, at least in the sense that they believe in God's promise of an eternal reward. But in the elect this faith is operative through love, whereas in the reprobate it remains "inert and sluggish and idle" (*Comm. Rom.* 242). In fact, Abelard says here that such faith *just is* the grace that grounds both the initial good will and perseverance in good will. There is, then, obviously no need for new infusions of divine grace for each new act of good will. If desire for heavenly beatitude is enough to



inspire a first good act, it is enough to inspire further good acts. So (although Abelard doesn't say this explicitly) if I fall away from the good work that I have begun, it must be my fault rather than God's. For he has done everything necessary to entice me; my own lethargy is to blame for my backsliding.

At this point we have enough not only to solve the textual difficulty that faced us earlier but also to see clearly what is distinctive about Abelard's view of grace. The textual difficulty, you will recall, is that Abelard moves immediately from the doctor analogy – which illustrates human powerlessness to accept grace – to saying “And so we say that it is not necessary for God to offer us new grace for each good work” (*Comm. Rom.* 241). How is the non-necessity of repeated gifts of grace connected conceptually with human powerlessness to accept grace? The connection works in the following way. Abelard first notes that if we are really as powerless as the doctor analogy suggests, human damnation will be the inevitable result of God's refusal to stuff the salvific grace-pill down our throats. So he looks for an account of grace that respects the divine initiative (for we must not lapse into blatant Pelagianism) but lays the blame for damnation squarely on sinners. He respects the divine initiative by insisting that we cannot be saved unless God does what is necessary to draw us to him. But he makes sinners culpable for their own damnation by insisting not only that God does this for everyone (and not merely for those who will be saved) but also that everyone has the power to accept or reject God's wooing. On this picture, grace is not like a steroid injection to give otherwise unavailable strength for good works, a new injection being needed for each new good work. Instead, it is simply a divine offer of a good that we already have the power to accept. As long as the good remains on offer and our power to accept it is intact, there is clearly no need for God to keep repeating himself.

So Abelard rejects the doctor analogy as originally presented. But does he also reject the view with which he introduced that analogy: namely, that we need grace in order to accept grace? He doesn't say, but it's reasonable to think the answer is no. We do need grace in order to accept grace, but the grace in question is simply God's creating our nature appropriately, so that we can be moved by his offer of eternal life and can decide whether to put forth the effort needed to attain it. Abelard is certainly willing to call our natural powers gifts

of grace, as he does in discussing the Gentiles' natural knowledge of the moral law.<sup>24</sup>

## V.2 *A natural development*

Now notice that the motivation ascribed to human beings in Abelard's account of grace seems entirely mercenary. God gives us grace by offering us eternal happiness, and we do his will because we want what he offers. But the Passion was supposed to enable us to serve God because we love God for his own sake, and not because we fear punishment or desire reward.<sup>25</sup> And in any event, it seems clear that the offer of eternal happiness is not made exclusively in the Passion, so the Passion does not seem to be a distinctive vehicle of divine grace. So one might suspect that Abelard's account of grace is hopelessly at odds with his account of the Atonement.

I must admit that Abelard makes no effort to resolve this difficulty; there's no evidence that he even realized there was a problem. But on his behalf I will propose a solution that accommodates the main lines of Abelard's thinking on these matters and does so in a way that I suspect would meet with his approval. First, there is one way in which the Passion is obviously distinctive. It involves not merely the offer of happiness but an actual concrete step taken by God to secure our happiness. It therefore excites not only desire but gratitude. Even so, that gratitude is still basically self-regarding; we are thankful for what God has done *for us*. Consider what Abelard has to say about the limited worth of this sort of gratitude:

If I love God because he loves me . . . the saying of Truth itself applies to me: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you have?" (Matthew 5:46). Certainly no reward for justice's sake, since I am not regarding the worth of the thing loved but [merely] my own benefit. And I would love someone else as much or even more if he did me as much or even more good; and I would no longer love him if I did not hope to gain anything further from him. Hence, a good many people – in fact, nearly all of them – have grown so wicked in their thinking that they openly admit they wouldn't revere or love God at all if they didn't think he would be of any use to them. (*Comm. Rom.* 202–203)

But the Passion, as an example of selfless love, contains within itself the seeds of a remedy for this selfishness. The love he showed us in the Passion was

that true and pure love that the Apostle describes in these words: "it does not seek its own" . . . For Christ's love for us was so pure that not only did he die for us, but in everything he did for us he sought no advantage for himself, whether temporal or eternal, but only our well-being; he did not act with an eye to some reward for himself, but did everything out of a desire for our salvation. (*Comm. Rom.* 201)

And the Passion should not be thought of merely as an example to emulate. It is the event that above all others reveals to us the nature, the supreme and unstinting love, of God himself. By showing us the incomparable goodness and love of God, it shows us how much God deserves to be loved – not merely because of what he has done for us, but because of who he is. Abelard exclaims, "Oh that we might have such pure affection for God that we would love him insofar as he is good in himself rather than insofar as he is useful to us!" (*Comm. Rom.* 204).

Paradoxically, by presenting God in his most lovable aspect and thereby moving us to love him without regard for our own happiness, the Passion also fits us to receive happiness. For the true reward for obedience to God is nothing other than God himself. Unless we love God for who he is, we do not really desire our own happiness after all; and anything else God might give us is good only because of God himself.<sup>26</sup> Recall that God's grace was said to consist in his offering us eternal happiness. We can now see that God's offering us eternal happiness can be nothing other than his offering himself. God himself is the *integra causa amoris* (*Comm. Rom.* 204), the complete and sufficient object of love. By revealing himself as infinitely lovable through the sacrificial death of Christ, he empowers us to serve him out of love rather than out of fear. This love for God is the charity that makes us righteous. It is in this way that we are justified by the Passion of Christ.

## VI. CONCLUSION

So we are justified, made righteous, through charity. This charity not only enables us to resist concupiscence, it also enables us to serve God out of love rather than out of fear. And since charity is enkindled in our hearts by the Passion of Christ, the exemplarist reading of Abelard has at least a kernel of the truth: the Passion accomplishes our reconciliation with God through its effect on the human

heart. As we have seen, however, Abelard does not think it could have such an effect unless it also achieved some objective benefit for us; that benefit is our deliverance from punishment for the sin of our first parents. The exemplarist reading denies any such objective benefit and therefore misses a key aspect of Abelard's theory of the Atonement.

Now recall that it was because of his supposed exemplarism that Bernard charged Abelard with Pelagianism. Since the charge of exemplarism has been answered, one might expect that the charge of Pelagianism can be dropped as well. But in fact the issue of Pelagianism remains open. For Bernard's worry was that if our redemption consists in a change of heart brought on by our response to the Passion, then it is we who accomplish our own redemption; and Abelard certainly does think that our redemption consists precisely in such a change of heart.

Whether Abelard is a Pelagian will largely depend on how we characterize Pelagianism. If we define it as the view that one can act rightly apart from grace, Abelard is (as I have already argued) no Pelagian. But then one might worry that he escapes Pelagianism only on a technicality, since he considers our natural powers gifts of grace – they even fit his definition of grace as “a gift not conferred on the basis of prior merits” (*Comm. Rom.* 60). So suppose instead that we define Pelagianism as the view that human beings in their present state can will rightly through an unaided exercise of their power of free choice. On that definition Abelard is indeed a Pelagian. In the *Sententie Hermanni* he says that “unless we say that man, from himself through free choice from his nature, has the ability to love God and cleave to him, we cannot avoid the conclusion that grace predetermines our merits.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, if we are so enervated by the sickness of sin that we cannot, on our own, either accept or refuse the medicine of divine grace, some patients will be lost solely because the Great Physician gratuitously withholds treatment. Such caprice, Abelard thinks, cannot be reconciled with the divine charity that is both manifested and made effective in the Passion of Christ.

#### NOTES

1. Farrer 1960, 20.
2. See Buytaert 1969, vol. XI, 17–20, for a catalogue of the *quaestiones*.

3. Buytaert 1969, vol. XI, 16.
4. Swinburne 1989, 162.
5. Letter 190, in Leclercq, Talbot, and Rochais 1957, vol. VIII, 37.
6. Quinn 1993, 292.
7. Rashdall 1919, 360.
8. Weingart 1970.
9. Marenbon 1997a, 322, n. 45.
10. Quinn 1993, 296.
11. Quinn 1993, 292–295.
12. When Abelard quotes the parts of Romans on which he is commenting in a given passage, I put the scriptural text in capitals; other quotations from scripture are indicated by quotation marks.
13. This theme first appears in the commentary on the second word of the epistle (which in Abelard's translation is *servus*, servant) and recurs throughout the work. It is especially prominent in Book III, where Abelard comments on Romans 7 and 8.
14. The ransom theory was the dominant theory of the Atonement for the first millennium or so of Christian thought. Unlike the theory of penal substitution, it can claim some basis in the words of Christ himself. In Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, Jesus says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for the sake of many." In his attack on Abelard Bernard clearly regards the ransom theory as a non-negotiable element of orthodoxy, but no less a figure than Anselm of Canterbury had denied it: see *Cur Deus Homo* 1.7.
15. Abelard makes the same claim in his comments on Romans 4:7–8 (124–126). For example, he writes that "sin (*iniquitas*) is remitted when the punishment for it, which could be exacted by justice, is dismissed (*condonare*) by grace" (124).
16. Here and in Abelard's exposition "sinful flesh" is literally "flesh of sin."
17. For example: "through Adam we incur damnation" (*Comm. Rom.* 157) and, at the end of the *quaestio* on original sin, "that utterly dire and eternal death that we incur through that [original] sin" (*Comm. Rom.* 175).
18. At *Comm. Rom.* 175, he speaks of "the condition of immortality, which was lost through original sin." At 214 he says that we are "liable to physical death on account of the sin of our first parents" and explains why we do not recover immortality when our sins are forgiven.
19. It is customary to leave the word *fomes* untranslated. It literally means "kindling" or "tinder"; metaphorically, the idea is that the disordered human heart needs only a small spark of temptation to ignite sinful action.

20. Thus Abelard: "AND TAKING ME PRISONER, i.e., dragging me off unwillingly as a prisoner TO THE LAW, i.e., the obedience, OF SIN conceived by the mind, so that I execute it in deed, WHICH law, thus taking me prisoner and turning me away from God, my rightful Lord, as has been said, IS IN MY MEMBERS" (*Comm. Rom.* 209).
21. This was, by the way, the same tack Abelard took in explaining how it could be licit for God to punish us for the sin of Adam and Eve.
22. Adding to the strangeness is the conclusion of the sentence: "but often, although God distributes an equal gift of grace to some, it doesn't have equal effects on their deeds; in fact, one who has received more grace for acting will act less [well]." The "but" implies that this observation in some way contrasts with what has just been said, but of course there is no contrast at all between the unequal effects of equal grace and the non-necessity of repeated gifts of grace. If Abelard had gone straight from the doctor analogy to the second half of the sentence, the connection would have been clear. If the doctor doesn't enable the patient to receive grace, it's the doctor's fault that the patient doesn't recover; but God offers everyone equal grace, so if one doesn't act well it's one's own fault.
23. "Set on fire" represents the Latin *accensus*, Abelard's usual word for the effect of the Passion on the receptive heart.
24. See in particular the commentary on 1:21 (*Comm. Rom.* 71).
25. Abelard speaks eloquently of the spiritual immaturity of such mercenary motives for the love of God, which he associates with the Old Law. His most effective lines, however, are quoted from Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 53:10: "If you praise God because he gives you something, you are not loving God unselfishly (*gratis*). You would be embarrassed if your wife loved you because of your wealth and would consider adultery if you happened to fall into poverty. Since, then, you want to be loved unselfishly by your wife, will you love God for the sake of something else? What reward will you receive from God, you greedy wretch?" (*Comm. Rom.* 202).
26. As Abelard quotes from Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 53:10, "HE WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH does not keep the earth in store for you, but himself. . . . Have no regard for all these things, but reach for God himself. And these things that he gives you are good on account of the giver" (*Comm. Rom.* 202).
27. *Sent. Herm.* 155.

## 9 Ethics

Peter Abelard's contributions to ethics are concentrated in two works, his *Ethics* (or *Scito te Ipsum*) and his *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian* (or *Collationes*).<sup>1</sup> There are ethical insights to be found scattered elsewhere in his works, but for the sustained presentation of an ethical theory, one can only turn to these two works. The *Dialogue* is actually two dialogues, one between a philosopher and a Jew, the other between the philosopher and a Christian, debating the relative merits of pagan philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. The *Ethics* concentrates on the development of a distinctively Christian ethical theory. It was to have consisted of two books.

The unfinished second book of the *Ethics* begins with a description of what Abelard takes himself to have accomplished in the first book, namely, the provision of an understanding of what sins are, how they are rectified, and how they differ from vices (*Sc.* 128.1–4; Spade 1995, 226). The second book was supposed to have taken up the topic of what it is to do good, or, as he prefers to put it in his more careful moments, what it is to do well (*Coll.* 163.3229–3230; Spade 1995, 404). The text was abandoned after one page. The *Ethics*, then, consists of a rather elaborate and zestful account of wrongdoing along with the merest of gestures towards an account of right-doing. It is as if Dante had neglected to write *Paradiso* after finishing *Inferno*. But as the newspapers attest daily, accounts of wrongdoing fascinate us more than accounts of right-doing: how many more people have read *Inferno* than *Paradiso*?

We can speculate, however, about what the general contours of Abelard's account would have been by deploying these strategies. First, if a thing's functioning badly gives us clues about how it should

function well, then an examination of Abelard's account of sin should repay our efforts. Second, we can hope to exploit other writings of Abelard. Third, as the focus on sin indicates, Abelard seeks to provide an account of ethics that is theistic – more specifically, Christian – in its essential features. Although Abelard is a maverick on many philosophical matters, his project would misfire fundamentally were it to present an ethical theory that is unrecognizable or indefensible from the point of view of scripture and the Christian tradition. We can appeal to the constraints thereby provided to impart some direction to our speculation.

I shall begin by examining Abelard's presentation and defense of his account of sin in the *Ethics*, organizing the examination in the hopes of shedding light on what it is to act well.

## I. THE BIG IDEA

Early in the first book, Abelard puts forward three theses about what sin is *not* and one thesis about what sin *is*. A sin is not a mental vice, like irascibility or wantonness, that disposes us to do bad deeds. Nor is a sin the bad deed itself (*Sc.* 2.21–22; Spade 1995, 4). A bit later, Abelard claims that the *will* to perform a bad deed is also not a sin (*Sc.* 6.11 ff; Spade 1995, 9ff.). What sin is, according to Abelard, is contempt of God (*Sc.* 4.31–32; Spade 1995, 7). What are Abelard's arguments for the three negative theses? And what is contempt of God, such that it is not any mental vice, or deed, or act of will? I shall begin by examining the negative theses, and defer discussion of the contempt-of-God thesis until Section II.

A sin is not a mental vice, according to Abelard, because one can have a vice and yet, by resisting it, not sin. A person with a tendency towards irascibility, for example, who successfully resists it is not to be charged with a sin just for having the tendency. Vices dispose us to sin but they are not the sins to which we are thereby disposed.<sup>2</sup>

There is no concise, straightforward argument for the remarkable thesis that no sin is a deed. Instead there are reiterations of that thesis interspersed in the argument for the positive thesis that sin is contempt of God. (And this comes after Abelard's defense of his third negative thesis.) But an argument for the positive thesis does not by itself establish the thesis that no deed is a sin. Abelard must



exclude the possibility that one way to scorn God is to *act* in ways contemptuous of God.

We get some help when Abelard says, as if summing up results established previously, that “outward deeds,” which are “equally common to reprobates and the elect, are in themselves all indifferent” (*Sc.* 44.30–31; Spade 1995, 90). In fact, he had hitherto neither explicitly characterized deeds as outward (*exterior*), nor made the (sociological?) observation about their distribution among saints and sinners, nor described them as indifferent. Nevertheless the quasi-summary is helpful, enabling us to construct the following edifice on its foundation.

Here is an example that Abelard uses at least twice (*Sc.* 28.11–17, Spade 1995, 58; and *Coll.* 164.3237–3241, Spade 1995, 404): two people participate in the legal execution of a criminal. One acts out of a desire to see justice served, the other out of personal hatred of the criminal arising from a long-standing feud. No matter how intense our scrutiny of their behavior, we might not be able to discern who is acting justly and who is acting unjustly. We can have a complete specification of the “outward deeds” – the overt, publicly observable bodily motions of a person – and still not know about the person’s *inner* life – the beliefs, desires, motives, intentions, and the like – that result in the outward deeds.

Outward deeds can thus be epistemologically inconclusive regarding an agent’s mental states. Although this phenomenon is related to the conception of indifference mentioned above, it does not explain the claim that outward deeds are indifferent. In the *Dialogue* Abelard says that a thing is indifferent if it is neither good nor evil (*Coll.* 160.3158; Spade 1995, 397). Abelard’s claim, then, is that no outward deed is good or evil in itself: all bodily motions are morally neutral.

Perhaps what Abelard has in mind is this. One and the same bodily motion can, depending on circumstances, be embedded in a conductor’s downbeat, a minister’s blessing, and an executioner’s coup de grâce. To the extent to which bodily motions are interpreted as having moral significance, it is because of the inferences people make about the mental states and activities behind them. But, as we shall see, it is Abelard’s view that, even when the inferences are correct, it is a mistake to call the bodily motions good or bad, righteous or sinful. Predicates of moral appraisal attach properly to internal items,

the states and activities residing in the agent's soul. Thus, no deed is a sin.

The inward–outward dichotomy is a time-honored one in the history of philosophy. It is frequently associated with some sort of soul–body dualism. If Abelard had a philosophical theory about the relation between soul and body, it is certainly not prominent in his writings. At one point in the *Ethics*, in order to emphasize the point that the commission of an outward deed does not augment the soul's sin, Abelard concludes, "As if that which occurred outwardly in the body could contaminate the soul!" (*Sc.* 22.30–32; Spade 1995, 47). It is tempting to read into this remark Augustine's dualism, which entails, among other things, that because the soul is superior to the body, it cannot be affected by what happens to the body. As we will see below, Abelard was influenced, directly or indirectly, by Augustine's thought. But this one passage is too isolated to serve as a basis for an imputation of Augustine's extreme dualism to Abelard.<sup>3</sup> It will suffice for our purposes to suppose that whatever Abelard's theory might have been, it would legitimize his use of inward–outward imagery.

Abelard's third negative thesis, that to sin is not to will to perform a bad deed, eliminates one more likely suspect – recall that vices have already been dismissed – from the interior rogue's gallery. In the process of defending the thesis, Abelard considers an example that had first appeared in Book 1 of Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*. Abelard reworks the example to present an analysis of it at odds with Augustine's own analysis. But Abelard's reworking of the example relies on conceptual apparatus that Augustine had developed after having written *De libero arbitrio*. Examination of the example and its reworking will help us to see not only the rationale for the negative thesis but also for Abelard's positive thesis.

Here is the example. A servant flees his sadistic master, who is bent on torturing and killing the servant. Cornered finally by the master and fearing for his own life, the servant kills the master. Augustine and Abelard agree that the servant has done something wrong. They offer differing diagnoses of what the wrongness consists in. In *De libero arbitrio* Augustine tries out the hypothesis that all wrongdoing is motivated by inordinate desire,<sup>4</sup> desire that is disproportionate to the value of the object desired. The example of the servant killing his master seems at first blush to be a counterexample

to the hypothesis, for we are to suppose that the servant's desire is to live a life without fear, and no one can be faulted for having that desire. Augustine's resolution of the case is to claim, in effect, that the servant's desire is inordinate nevertheless, because it leads the servant to overvalue his own life. His life is a good thing, to be sure, as is, Augustine might have added, his master's life. But the servant's life is not the sort of thing that can be possessed without the fear of losing it. Thus to desire to possess one's life without fear of losing it, no matter what the cost, is to fail to appreciate that sometimes the cost is too high.<sup>5</sup>

Augustine's hypothesis pins wrongdoing on a set of unruly desires. Abelard does not accept the maneuver. Let us look first at what he says about Augustine's example. There is nothing wrong with the servant's wanting to preserve his life; no hint from Abelard that this desire is inordinate. If there is nothing wrong with the will for self-preservation, what about the servant's will to kill his master? Abelard's reply is that the servant has no such will; in the case as described, he kills his master unwillingly (*Sc.* 6.32–8.4; Spade 1995, 14). A critic might protest that Abelard is surely mistaken: Because the servant's action of slaying the master was not a matter of inadvertence or accident, it seems obvious that the servant wanted to kill the master and that that very desire was what brought about the action. The servant, after all, could have acquiesced in his own death rather than kill his master. Abelard acknowledges that that would have been the right thing to do. That the servant chose to kill his master shows that even if he had a desire not to kill, that desire was outmatched by the desire to kill. It is disingenuous, then, for Abelard to claim that the servant killed unwillingly. Since Abelard agrees that the homicide was unjust, what else could its evil consist in for him if not the evil desire?

It is crucial to see that Abelard's strategy in reply is to assert that the servant has no evil desire. Abelard does not help himself to a more radical claim that might have been suggested by the moral neutrality of bodily behavior, that no desire is bad. Some desires are bad. It would be better for a person not to have them. Even so, one's harboring bad desires does not make one a sinner. Bad desires are something to be fought against and overcome. Indeed, Abelard suggests that if we had no bad desires with which to contend, if our desires always naturally conformed to God's will, then we would be

deprived of the opportunity to achieve anything great for God's sake (*Sc.* 12.3–17; Spade 1995, 22–23).

The key to understanding why the critic's protest misfires is to see that, for Abelard, one and the same action can be done unwillingly yet intentionally. An intentional action need not be whatever action happens to have the strongest desires behind it. When Abelard uses the verbs *volo* (I want) and *nolo* (I do not want), they apply exclusively to desires. Correspondingly, when he speaks of an agent's *voluntas* (will) he is simply referring to what the agent would most want to do, assuming that the agent is not subject to any kind of coercion.<sup>6</sup> In happy circumstances what the agent does intentionally just is what the agent most wants to do. But not all circumstances are happy. Abelard submits the master-killing servant to illustrate the possibility of an agent acting intentionally but unwillingly.<sup>7</sup> It might be useful to consider a simpler example, one in which the issue of the agent's sinning does not arise. The mugger's menu, "Your money or your life," most likely will induce you to surrender your money intentionally but unwillingly. There is some element of choice even in this harrowing circumstance, a choice whose potential for gallows humor was exploited by the radio comedian Jack Benny ("I'm thinking, I'm thinking . . ."). Abelard allows that your surrendering your money can be voluntary even when performed unwillingly. But "voluntary" here can only mean that your action was not committed with the necessity of inevitability or that the action corresponds to *some* desire of yours, for example, a desire to escape or defer death (*Sc.* 16.24–32; Spade 1995, 34). Abelard does not take the fact that you have a desire to avoid death to tell against the claim that you act unwillingly. To adapt a point of his, "I wanted to give him the money from a desire to save my life" does not entail "I wanted to give him the money." There is no will or desire to surrender the money; it is rather that surrendering the money is something you suffer in order to achieve something you *do* want (*Sc.* 8.21–10.6; Spade 1995, 17–18). The cases of the homicidal servant and the mugger's victim have this in common: they are specimens of intentional, unwilling, but voluntary action. They differ in that one is sinful, the other not.

The distinction between desire and intention matters to Abelard because he wants to locate an action's sinfulness not in the agent's desires but in the agent's intention. Although Abelard relies on the distinction, he does not provide much explicit help in seeing how he

arrived at it or how its two central concepts differ. In the next few paragraphs I shall comment on the provenance and the contours of the distinction. I warn the reader that the comments stray increasingly beyond the confines of the text.

### 1.1 *Intention as consent*

Abelard suggests that to form an intention to do something is to *consent* to that thing. The terminology of consent traces back to Augustine, who, in *De sermone Domini in monte*, a work written approximately six years after Book 1 of *De libero arbitrio*, develops an account of sin that supplements or supplants the earlier account of sin as inordinate desire. On this later account, a sin is the culmination of three stages, suggestion, pleasure, and consent. Suggestions, Augustine says, come about typically through the workings of memory or the bodily senses, and can range from a momentary thought about having sex with someone to a vivid fantasy about ramming one's car into the vehicle that just cut into one's traffic lane. In Abelard's hands, suggestion is linked more closely to conscious instigators, including demons (*Sc.* 34.3–38.4; Spade 1995, 69–76). One may or may not take pleasure in such suggestions. Abelard has no brief to file against pleasure, any more than he did against desires. Perhaps, like desires, some pleasures are bad, for instance, taking pleasure in another person's suffering. But Abelard asserts that no natural *bodily* pleasure is a sin. If fiends were to force some helpless monk to lie amid amorous women, he says, and if that helpless monk were to be thus led into pleasure, but not consent, who would dare call the pleasure a sin? (*Sc.* 20.15–19; Spade 1995, 42.) If bodily pleasures were sins, then God would be at fault for having created us in such a way that we cannot help but enjoy the taste of some foods (*Sc.* 18.13–16; Spade 1995, 37). Finally, Abelard follows Augustine in giving a subjunctive analysis of consent: to consent to a pleasurable suggestion to  $\varphi$  is to set oneself to  $\varphi$  should opportunity arise (*Sc.* 14.17–19; Spade 1995, 29).<sup>8</sup>

"There are those," Abelard observes, "who completely regret being drawn into consent to lust or to a bad will, and are compelled out of the weakness of the flesh to want what they by no means want to want" (*Sc.* 16.22–24; Spade 1995, 33). (This passage immediately precedes the observation that some intentional actions are voluntary

only in the attenuated sense that is compatible with their not being done willingly.) It is tempting to see in this passage a prefiguration of Harry Frankfurt's distinction between freedom of action and freedom of will.<sup>9</sup> Roughly, one has freedom of action if one is free to do what one wants to do. One has freedom of will if one is free to want what one wants to want; if, that is, there is harmony between one's first-order desires and one's second-order desires. A narcotics addict who takes drugs because he wants to has freedom of action. Nonetheless he lacks freedom of will if his second-order desire not to have a first-order desire for narcotics is powerless over the first-order desire. Conversely, a person who does not realize that she is locked in her room may have freedom of will, the freedom to pick and choose among her first-order desires, even though she would lack the freedom to act on a desire to leave her room, were she to adopt that desire. Abelard does not examine further the phenomena of first- and second-order desires and the harmonies and dissonances that are possible among them. His focus is on intention, since that is where sin finds it home. But an examination of the philosophical contours of intentions and desires may help us to understand why Abelard endorses the change in the account of sin given by Augustine.

### *1.2 Intentions and second-order desires*

Like intentions, second-order desires presuppose the capacity for self-awareness. An intention is a setting of *oneself* to do something. The object of a second-order desire is not just any first-order desire but a first-order desire of *one's own*. There is thus some cognitive capacity required of any creature capable of entertaining intentions and second-order desires. There may be a further similarity between them. A second-order desire can be directed favorably or unfavorably at a first-order desire already in place. ("I am glad I want to have a large family." "I wish I did not have a craving for tobacco.") A second-order desire can also be directed at a non-existent first-order desire. ("I want to become more willing to help others.") One might think that some second-order desires are thus synchronous with their first-order, object desires while others are future-directed. Plato put forward the thesis in the *Symposium*, however, that the desire to have *x*, when one already has *x*, is really the desire to retain *x*.<sup>10</sup> It would seem to be a trivial extension to add that the desire not to have *x*,

when one in fact has  $x$ , is really the desire to lose  $x$ . If Plato is correct, then all desires are future-directed. And even if Plato is mistaken in general, one might be able to make a case for the more circumscribed claim that all second-order desires are future-directed. If such a Platonic case could be made, then second-order desires would share an important feature with intentions, which seem to be essentially future-oriented.

Still, there would be these differences, differences that suggest that intentions are further up the cognitive stream. Second-order desires have first-order desires as their objects. Can there be second-order intentions, that is, intentions that take other, garden-variety intentions as their objects? The schema, "I intend to intend to  $\phi$ ," if not a typographical error, induces a kind of mental vertigo. It is hard to imagine a circumstance in which it does not boil down to "I intend to  $\phi$ ." In contrast, "I intend to have only charitable intentions" and "I intend not to have vicious intentions," however rare, pompous, and foolhardy they may appear, are intelligible. If wanting to want always points to a future, intending to have intentions points to a future in the future. For if we intend to acquire or retain certain intentions, then we must intend that those future intentions will lead to action, if opportunity arises, at a time subsequent to their acquisition or retention. Whereas second-order desires, given the Platonic thesis, require that we cognize ourselves as continuing subjects in the future, second-order intentions require that we envision ourselves not merely as continuing in the future, but as having intentions in the future that we may or may not have now, and as being prepared to act on those intentions at a still further future time.

### *1.3 Conflicting desires and conflicting intentions*

We humans are no strangers to the phenomenon of one person having conflicting desires, that is, two or more desires such that the satisfaction of one or more of them precludes the satisfaction of others. The phenomenon is as familiar as wanting to have your cake and eat it too. On first thoughts we might regard cases of intrapersonal desire conflict as a kind of volitional immaturity. On second thoughts it might occur to us that there are some occasions when *not* to be pulled in opposite directions would be a symptom of less than full humanity. Sophie can save one of her children but not both; which

will it be? A reply of "Oh, well, flip a coin," might pass muster from a decision-theoretic point of view. But were Sophie not to persist in wanting to save both children even when she knew she could not, then Sophie would have become as brutalized as those who forced the choice upon her.

The situation is quite different with conflicting intentions. We understand Hamlet's wanting and not wanting to slay Claudius and appreciate the dramatic tension that his ambivalence contributes to the play and to the psychological complexity of its protagonist. We are gripped by the pivotal scene in which Hamlet, fully intent on killing Claudius, forswears his intention at the last moment because to kill Claudius while Claudius is praying would be to allow Claudius to go to heaven.<sup>11</sup> The logic of decisions is non-monotonic: one's intentions can and should change sometimes with the addition of a new consideration. Suppose now that I tell you that Shakespeare contemplated inserting material into *Hamlet* that has Hamlet announcing in the same breath, without benefit of intervening considerations and without equivocation, that he intends to kill Claudius and that he intends not to kill Claudius. I ask you to speculate on how the scene would have fit into the play. Two hypotheses might occur to you. One is that Shakespeare was thinking of portraying Hamlet as not merely burning to avenge his father's death yet frozen by inconclusive evidence: Shakespeare had contemplated having Hamlet become completely unhinged. The other is that Shakespeare was planning to have Hamlet feign being unhinged by putting the unused material into the scene with the barmy but pointed banter with Polonius. Either hypothesis rightly regards the simultaneous holding of both intentions as a sign of massive irrationality.

To depict intention as a kind of consent following on the heels of suggestion and desire enables us to see why this regard is appropriate. Consent, as employed by Augustine and Abelard, suggests an executive decision that has taken into account various suggestions received from the executive's constituents, weighted by the strengths of the constituents' desires, but mindful of the executive's own desires concerning the desirability or undesirability of the constituents' desires. The palate favors going out for a pizza. The conscience reports unreadiness for tomorrow's examination. The person



has a pizza delivered and spends the saved time studying. An executive who promulgates inconsistent policies provides no coherent guidance for her constituents or herself. We may not be surprised to find different components of a corporate body in competition with each other. But we should think that the corporate head is derelict or inept if her decisions and policies take no steps towards diminishing the internal competition by restructuring the desires. Inconsistent policies have the effect of sanctioning all actions and legitimating all desires in a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. A cynical corporate head, whose personal interests diverged from the interests of the corporation, might find an occasion to hamstring the latter for the sake of the former. But, to return the analogy to the individual case, when the interests of one's constituents are literally one's own interests, to pit the one against the other is to court schizophrenia.

#### *I.4 Ends and means*

We have seen that Abelard rejects the following inference pattern about desires: if *A* wants *y* and *x* is the only means to *y*, then *A* wants *x*. This inference pattern seems to rest on a false descriptive generalization. Desire for an end may or may not confer desire on the means necessary to achieving the end. Consider now an analogous inference pattern for intentions: if *A* intends *y* and *x* is the only means to *y*, then *A* intends *x*. In the history of philosophy after Abelard's time, the analogous pattern for intentions (and patterns bearing a strong family resemblance to it) has often been put forward as a normative principle, imputing responsibility to *A* for intending the necessary means in the very process of intending an end. Here, for a recent example, is Allen Wood's introduction to his discussion of Kant's notion of a hypothetical imperative:

To set an end is to undertake a self-given normative commitment to carry out some plan for achieving the end. Sometimes when I have set an end, I subsequently feel an impulse or desire either to perform some action that precludes achieving the end or else to refrain from an action that is necessary for achieving the end. In such cases, I must (on pain of a failure of rationality) make up my mind whether to abandon the end or to abstain from acting on the impulse.<sup>12</sup>

Abelard does not discuss this feature allegedly attaching to intentions. If intentions do impose a standard of instrumental rationality on agents who have them, this is yet another respect in which intentions carry with them more cognitive baggage than do desires. Perhaps because Abelard neglects the topic of means–end rationality, he also does not seem to be aware of a vexing distinction that would become crucial to the principle of double effect, namely, the distinction between what one intends and what one merely foresees as consequences of one's actions.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, I have speculated, I hope on Abelard's behalf, that to locate sin in the realm of intentions rather than the domain of desires is to imply that sins require for their commission beings whose level of rational, cognitive sophistication is higher than that of beings who are merely capable of desires, even second-order desires. Infants and animals have desires. But, "as blessed Jerome has remarked, and as plain reason maintains, as long as the soul remains in the stage of infancy, it lacks sin" (*Sc.* 22.1–3; Spade 1995, 44).

## II. DETAILS

So far we have been following the ramifications of Abelard's three negative theses. His positive thesis is that all sins are acts of intention, whether they be translated into physical action or not. But not all acts of intention are sins. What makes an intention, or an act of consent, a sin? Abelard's answer is that sinful consent is "contempt of God and an offense against him" (*Sc.* 4:32; Spade 1995, 7). The terms are carefully chosen: as Abelard points out immediately, no one can literally damage God, but contempt and offense are not the same as damage.<sup>14</sup> More formally, Abelard says that contempt of God is "not to do for his sake what we believe should be done by us for his sake, or not to omit doing for his sake what we believe should be omitted" (*Sc.* 6.3–6; Spade 1995, 8; reaffirmed at *Sc.* 54.30–32; Spade 1995, 110).<sup>15</sup> The definition specifies two kinds of failures, failing to do what one believes should be done and failing to refrain from that which one believes one should refrain. Abelard discusses both kinds of failures. The principal case offered in illustration of failing to do is a case involving non-culpable ignorance. The case illustrating a failure to refrain is a case of mistaken belief. As it turns out, the distinction between acting in ignorance and acting on a mistaken

belief tends to occupy Abelard's attention more than the distinction between failing to do and failing to refrain.

### II.1 *Sinning through ignorance*

The star example of the first sort of failure appears in Abelard's discussion of the persecution of Christ. It is not just that Christ's persecutors were not sinning if they believed that they were pleasing God by punishing a dangerous heretic. Even more strongly, Abelard claims that had they *failed* to punish Christ when they believed that he was a dangerous heretic, they *would* have been sinning (Sc. 54.27–56.8, 66.31–34; Spade 1995, 110–111, 131). Abelard spends more time defending the former claim than the latter, a reasonable strategy if he thought that the former claim is a consequence of the latter.<sup>16</sup> If Christ's persecutors were not sinful, why did Christ say "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)? Why is forgiveness necessary if they were free of sin?

Abelard's reply is to distinguish four senses of the term "sin," only two of which need concern us here. The *proper* sense of the term is the sense Abelard has advocated – contempt that is contempt of God. There is in addition what I shall call on Abelard's behalf a *public* sense of "sin," which applies to external deeds, in particular to those deeds which have not been "performed or willed correctly" (Sc. 56.32–58.1; Spade 1995, 130). Christ's persecutors have committed a public sin but not a sin proper. The commission of a public sin exposes its agents to divine punishment even though they might be without sin proper. Christ's petition, then, amounts to asking that God remit punishment on the persecutors that is otherwise justified by their deed. "Thus to sin through ignorance is this sort of thing: not to have a fault in this [act], but to do what is not fitting for us" (Sc. 66.27–28; Spade 1995, 116). To put the point in more contemporary terms, Abelard has just claimed that at least from the divine point of view, some offenses are *strict liability offenses*, that is, cases of culpable wrongdoing in which the offender has no *mens rea*. We shall see that Abelard countenances a similar class of offenses from the point of view of secular authority. When the point is put this way, however, it becomes obvious that Abelard needs to provide an account of what it is that makes a deed a public sin, something not performed or willed correctly. Contempt of God cannot be the only

dimension of moral wrongness. We need an account of what it is that makes an act “not fitting for us.”

## II.2 *Natural law*

As a prelude to his definition of sinning through ignorance, Abelard discusses the case of Cornelius the centurion, “a devout man who feared God with all his household” (Acts 10.2). As Abelard interprets the case, Cornelius had come to recognize and love God “by the natural law” (*Sc.* 64.17; Spade 1995, 126), but did not believe in Christ until Peter informed him. Abelard says that had Cornelius passed away believing in God before his acceptance of Christ, he would have been numbered not among the faithful but among those without faith. The reference to natural law is seemingly offhand and certainly isolated. Even so, I suggest that it may be the key to understanding why Abelard thinks some actions are fitting or unfitting for us independently of whether they express contempt of God.

In the *Dialogue*, the Philosopher claims that the natural law is “the science of morals we call ‘ethics’” (*Coll.* 44.85; Spade 1995, 11). It is “first” both in time and in nature to the “Old Law” given to the Jews – the precepts contained in the Pentateuch – and to the “New Law” given to Christians and contained in the Gospels and the apostles’ teaching. Its temporal primacy explains how the ancient pagans were able to achieve moral sophistication without knowledge of the Old or New Law. Its natural primacy involves its being simpler than the Old or New Law. The Old and New Law are less simple in that they contain everything contained in natural law, but add to natural law’s content. The Old Law, for example, includes precepts concerning circumcision and forbidden food. Among the New Law’s edicts is a precept concerning baptism. The challenge the Philosopher sets the Jew and the Christian is to convince him, by rational argument alone, that these sorts of additions make the Old Law or the New Law superior to natural law. The presupposition behind the challenge, a presupposition made explicit in the Philosopher’s discussion of Job (*Coll.* 59.489–492; Spade 1995, 63), is that the content of natural law is discoverable by natural reason, that is, reason unaided by supernatural revelation. In contrast, insofar as the Old and New Law are less

simple than natural law, their complexity is attributable to content that appears not to be backed by reason but by faith based on revelation alone. We should note that the Philosopher takes the content of natural law – and thus the power of natural reason – to be fairly extensive. We know by it that God exists and that we must love God, neighbor (*Coll.* 53.332–334; Spade 1995, 48), parents, punish the depraved, and in general observe whatever practices are so necessary for all people that without them individual human merits would be insufficient (*Coll.* 125.2223–2225; Spade 1995, 283). Like Cornelius, then, the Philosopher is no atheist. Yet, also like Cornelius, there is no assurance that the Philosopher will be saved, no matter how fervent his piety, if he lacks faith in Christ (*Sc.* 64.17–23; Spade 1995, 126). Abelard is careful *not* to say that Cornelius, and by implication, the Philosopher, would definitely be damned. To say that would be to presume to know too much about God's plans.

One of the examples Abelard uses to illustrate the notion of sinning through ignorance is a hunting accident (*Sc.* 66.19–21; Spade 1995, 129). Overeager Nimrod may mistake a companion for a deer, death resulting. Not intentional homicide, but a substandard performance nonetheless. If one of the precepts of natural law enjoins us to exercise due diligence when engaging in dangerous activities, then Nimrod has disregarded natural law. Note here two different pleas of ignorance. "I didn't know that my companion had moved behind that bush," an acknowledgment of ignorance of factual circumstance, helps to explain how the homicide occurred, may exonerate Nimrod from a charge of murder, but still betokens negligence. "I didn't know that I was supposed to be careful while engaged in dangerous pastimes," a confession of ignorance of a relevant part of natural law, would betray not only Nimrod's behavior but Nimrod himself as substandard.

Let us return to the case of Christ's persecutors. Perhaps what Abelard has in mind is the thought that the persecutors have violated a precept of natural law. A likely candidate for such a precept might be that one should not punish the innocent. That Christ's persecutors violated this precept unwittingly exculpates them from the a charge of sin but not from a charge of acting in a way not fitting for them. As appealing as this solution may be, we shall see that it is at tension with other things Abelard has to say.

### II.3 *Sinning through mistaken belief*

Recall that the second part of Abelard's definition of contempt of God is failing to refrain from that which one believes one should refrain. Abelard does not discuss such a case in the *Ethics* or the *Dialogue*. We get some help from his *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Paul says of types of foodstuff that none is unclean in itself (Romans 14:14, 14:20). Yet, Paul continues, "He who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Abelard interprets the passage as maintaining that "he sins who uses even lawful things against his conscience" (*Comm. Rom.* 306.313–314).

It appears that Abelard is speaking in his own voice and intends his remark to apply universally. The Old Law contains a prohibition against eating pork. The New Law does not (see *Sc.* 18.19–23; Spade 1995, 38). Abelard believes that the New Law supersedes the Old Law. Does the New Law's supersession rescind all parts of the Old Law that are not also part of natural law? Or does the Old Law still remain in effect on the Jews? In either case consider a Jew who believes that it is illicit for him to eat pork, but who consents to eating pork nonetheless. If the Old Law is in effect, he is expressing contempt of God by consenting to something that actually transgresses God's law. If the Old Law is no longer in effect, then although he is not actually transgressing God's law, it would seem that as long as he mistakenly believes that he is, he actually is expressing contempt of God.

Abelard's definition of contempt of God sows the seed of what the agent believes into it essentially. What we are seeing, I suggest, is the harvest. Is the crop welcome? John Marenbon observes:

But if Abelard had thought about the more general application of the principle he appears to admit, he could hardly have remained complacent. . . . Applying the principle generally: I sin if I contravene what I believe, wrongly, is a revealed precept that applies to me. But I might believe wrongly that any precept is a revealed precept which applies to me, including ones which contradict precepts of natural law (for instance, supposedly revealed precepts commanding human sacrifice). I may even believe that my revealed precept includes the command to follow it, not natural law . . . Abelard does not see the difficulty which wrongly believed revealed precepts (whether general or particular) present for his theory.<sup>17</sup>

One might think that Abelard's complacency would be shaken upon seeing that, according to his theory, an agent, *A*, has sinned by intentionally refraining from human sacrifice when *A* believes that human sacrifice is commanded. How can *A* sin by doing the right thing? A related question: because refraining from human sacrifice is not otherwise sinful, how can *A*'s merely believing that it is sinful make it sinful? An unflappable Abelard should reply by reminding us that his theory countenances two dimensions of wrongdoing, acting in a way unfitting for us to act and sinning proper. If there is anything that is picked out by the phrase, "*A*'s doing the right thing," it can only be *A*'s act of eating pork or refraining from human sacrifice, which, we may suppose, *A* does fittingly. *A*'s sin is not this, however, nor is *A*'s sin established by *A*'s belief. *A*'s sin is in *consenting* to the sinful suggestion to which the belief gives rise.

If Abelard needs two dimensions of wrongdoing, sin proper and unfit action, parity of reason leads us to expect two dimensions of good conduct, namely, having the right intention and action that is fit for us to perform. Abelard takes pains to argue that when we call an intention and its ensuing action good, we correctly distinguish two things, the intention and the deed. We are mistaken, however, if we think that the goodness of the intention and the goodness of the action are two commensurable instances of goodness. Abelard's position on this point is not entirely stable. His first pronouncement, consonant with his thesis that all deeds are indifferent, is that when "good" is predicated of an action, the predication is akin to synecdoche. That is, the predication extends to a whole, the complex of intention plus action, what properly applies only to a part, the intention (*Sc.* 46.4–16; Spade 1995, 91). A bit later he seems willing to settle for a weaker view. Even if deeds can be good in some sense, the sense in which they can be good is different from the sense in which intentions can be good. This difference in sense is sufficient to preclude addition of the one good to the other to produce a complex whose goodness is greater than the goodness of the intention alone (*Sc.* 52.4–15; Spade 1995, 105).

In either case it is clear why Abelard insists on the claim that deeds do not amplify an agent's goodness. Suppose that two people have the same charitable intentions, but that one of them is robbed of his money through no fault of his own while the other brings her plans

to fruition. It cannot be that the second person earns more divine credit or that the first person's credit diminishes in the eyes of God because of the robber's malice. For if merit could be enhanced by external deeds, then the rich could become more meritorious than the poor simply by plowing their wealth into external projects. To think that wealth can by itself contribute to true happiness or the worth of the soul, says Abelard, is the height of madness (*Sc.* 48.25–30; Spade 1995, 99).

The performance of deeds does not add to an agent's sinfulness or merit. What is the point, then, of secular institutions of justice, especially punishment? If the real sin in murder lies in the murderer's consent, which will be duly assessed by a supremely knowledgeable and just judge, and if performance does not aggravate the felony, the imposition of punishment on a murderer by secular authorities might seem to be akin to double jeopardy. It is true that natural law is supposed to warrant punishing the depraved. Abelard does not rest content with a bare appeal to natural law; moreover, the cases he presents involve punishing those without relevant fault, not the depraved. His discussion unfolds in two stages. First Abelard argues for the permissibility of secular punishment. Then he argues for its practical value. The discussion would warm the hearts of many consequentialists.

The permissibility argument takes this form. If there are cases of legitimate secular punishment where there is no sin on the part of the defendant – cases where secular authorities may punish even if God remits punishment – then *a fortiori* there should be cases of legitimate secular punishment where the defendant has sinned. But there are cases of sinless deeds meriting secular punishment. Abelard cites two, one involving negligence, the other the knowing punishment of an innocent person. Therefore there are cases of legitimate secular punishment of sinners.

I do not propose to defend the first premise. It may appear to beg the question against those who worry about the justice of double jeopardy. Its defense would seem to depend, then, on the distinction between two kinds of wrongdoing, prosecuted in two different jurisdictions. I do want to look at Abelard's two cases more closely. In the first one, a destitute mother, in an attempt to keep her baby warm, takes him into bed with her and, while asleep, smothers him. Abelard maintains that a legal authority<sup>18</sup> is justified in exacting



a heavy penalty on the woman, even though she lacks sinful consent, in order to deter her and others from similar future behavior (*Sc.* 38:13–22; Spade 1995, 79–80). Divine justice scrutinizes the inner workings of the mind, where human justice cannot penetrate. Human justice attends to the outer behavior (*Sc.* 40.7–19; Spade 1995, 82–83), attempting to modify it, not so much with an eye to serving justice as to ensuring the common utility by preventing public injuries and the corruption of others (*Sc.* 44.3–5; Spade 1995, 88). This is the practical value of secular punishment. In pursuit of this value it may happen that a lesser offense should be punished more severely than a greater one, if the lesser offense, left unchecked, would tend to erode the common good more than the greater one. Thus arson is punished more severely than fornication even though fornication is the more serious sin from God's point of view (*Sc.* 42.5–44.2; Spade 1995, 86–87).

Abelard's second case is more troublesome. We are to imagine a judge before whom a defendant has been brought by unscrupulous plaintiffs. The plaintiffs impute something to the defendant. The judge realizes from the imputation that the defendant cannot be guilty. Yet at trial, the plaintiffs, using perjurious witnesses, make an un rebuttable case for the defendant's guilt. In discharging his judicial duties, the judge justly imposes punishment on someone he knows to be innocent (*Sc.* 38.22–40.5; Spade 1995, 81).

Let us suppose, on Abelard's behalf, that whatever it is by means of which the judge realizes the defendant's innocence, it cannot be admitted into the legal proceedings. Let us also suppose that there is no legal mechanism in place for the judge's recusing himself. These are very large suppositions indeed, but without them the judge's behavior cannot plausibly be described as the just fulfillment of his secular official duties. Even with them, however, Abelard's case is still vexing. Recall that in the case of Christ's persecutors, Abelard says that they did not sin, because they unwittingly failed to live up to a precept of natural law that one should not punish the innocent. What should we say of Abelard's judge, who *wittingly* consents to a violation of that precept? How can this fail to be a case of sin? It can be maintained that there is another Natural Law precept that dictates that one ought to discharge those legitimate duties entailed by one's voluntary acceptance of a particular vocation. Without further elucidation, however, we now must conclude that Abelard's judge is

ensnared in a moral dilemma. One precept says he must punish, the other says he must not. No matter what he does, he sins.<sup>19</sup>

One might try to dissolve the dilemma by claiming that one of the judge's two conflicting duties is weightier and takes precedence over the other. There are two problems. First, it is not clear that the duty to discharge one's office trumps the duty not to punish the innocent, as is required by Abelard's verdict. Second, even if one could make out a case to that effect, one would not thereby have shown that Abelard's judge is free from sin. All one would have shown is that Abelard's judge sins less grievously in punishing the innocent defendant than in failing to meet the obligations of his office.

It is possible to maintain that given the assumption that the judge has sinned, it does not follow that the sinless defendant's punishment is illegitimate. Abelard may be prepared to embrace a purely formalistic conception of secular judicial conduct, one that would maintain that as long as all public procedure is duly followed, the result is legitimate. This attitude would be consistent with the importance Abelard lays on the inward-outward distinction.

Fornication is a worse sin than arson, says Abelard, but one may wonder how Abelard's theory can accommodate degrees of sin. Contempt is contempt. It cannot be that the psychological intensity of the contempt is an accurate index of the gravity of sin, lest the guilt-ridden fornicator become less of a sinner than the swaggering arsonist. Psychological intensity would seem at most to provide a gauge to the distance the sinner has to travel to make repentance. Abelard scoffs at the Stoic doctrine that all sins are equal, calling it "plain foolishness" (*Sc.* 74.9; Spade 1995, 145) and the kind of insanity that consists in believing the most patent falsehood (*Coll.* 109.1795–1796; Spade 1995, 230). Yet his own theory raises the question of how it is that not all sins are equal.

Although Abelard presents a taxonomy of sins according to their gravity, the taxonomy is disappointing in its conventionality. According to Abelard, some sins are venial, others damnable; of damnable sins, some are criminal, some are not (*Sc.* 68.27–29; Spade 1995, 134). "Sins are venial or light when we consent to what we know should not be consented to; nevertheless at the time what we know does not occur in memory" (*Sc.* 68.31–70.1; Spade 1995, 135). Examples are boasting and overindulgence: there are occasions when, caught up in the spirit of the moment, we brag or eat or drink too

much and only in retrospect come to recall what we knew all along – the excessive nature of our behavior. It is distinctive of damnable sins that no one can have forgotten, even momentarily, that perjury, homicide, or adultery are sinful.<sup>20</sup> Finally, damnable sins that are criminal are those that have been carried out and made known publicly.

Set aside the fact that the taxonomy is a mixed bag: by Abelard's strictest lights, criminal sins are not a third class of sin proper. Set aside the fact that the taxonomy is too coarse-grained to help us see why, for instance, fornication is a more serious sin than arson. Abelard would still face the complaint that appealing to the phenomenon of forgettability does nothing to explain why damnable sins are worse than venial ones.

Let us raise a related problem for Abelard's theory. It bears some resemblance to his case of the two differently motivated executioners. Consider two cases of homicide, alike as they can be in their external manifestations and consequences. Suppose further that in both cases, the agent acts intentionally, consenting to the suggestion to kill the victim. In the first case, Grimesby stands to inherit a fortune upon the victim's death, and is motivated entirely by greed. In the second, Philemon has witnessed Amanda, Philemon's sister, suffer from a slow, painful, degenerative disease for which there is no cure. In her lucid moments, Amanda has urged Philemon to kill her. Philemon understands that he will gain nothing from Amanda's death and risks being charged with murder. He kills Amanda nevertheless; he can no longer bear seeing Amanda suffering. A natural reaction to the two cases is to say that motive should make a difference, a difference to which Abelard's theory seems insensitive. Grimesby intended to kill out of greed, Philemon out of compassion. As far as Abelard's theory is concerned, however, the only relevant moral dimension to sin is the intention. Would Abelard have us believe that Philemon's act is exactly as contemptuous of God as Grimesby's is? That God, "the examiner of the heart and reins," can see no significant moral difference between the two?

### III. CONJECTURES

At one point Abelard says that adultery is more displeasing to God than overeating because adultery does more injury to love of neighbor

(*Sc.* 74.12–19; Spade 1995, 146). Abelard alludes to what lies at the core of New Testament ethics. Love of God and love of neighbor are enjoined on Christians as the two great commandments, on which depend all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37–40). The more we come to love God, the more eager we are to avoid what offends him, and our eagerness will wax or wane in proportion to the magnitude of the offense (*Sc.* 72.24–26; Spade 1995, 142). To be sure, much the same could be said of fear of God, except that anxiety replaces eagerness. Fear motivates us to avoid incurring God's wrath. But fear can only produce painful and grudging compliance with God's will, while love involves endorsing God's will and taking on God's projects as the lover's own. Abelard depicts fear as standing to the Old Law as charity stands to the Gospel (*Sc.* 72.2–14; Spade 1995, 139–140). Fear of divine punishment is the source of what Abelard calls unfruitful penitence; love is the source of genuine and fruitful penitence (*Sc.* 76–92 *passim*; Spade 1995, 151–171 *passim*).

To say only this much, however, is to leave crucial questions unanswered. Why should we want to love God? Why should we want to love our neighbor? Abelard says precious little in answer. To provide a detailed response on his behalf would risk the charge of invention masquerading as exposition. I offer the following remarks as the least daring answer I can think of. They are anchored in a claim made by Abelard's Christian in the *Dialogue*, that the ultimate good for humans is to love the ultimate good itself, which is God (*Coll.* 132–133.2437–2440; Spade 1995, 315). We can presume that Abelard would regard it as axiomatic that we desire to be happy. If greater goods contribute to greater happiness and if God is the greatest of all goods, then Abelard has the ingredients of an answer to the first question. Themes that are prominent in the thought of Augustine would help to answer the second. Suppose that created goods exhibit different degrees of goodness to the extent to which they reflect God's goodness. Humans, who are (feebly) like God in possessing the capacity for judgment, are superior to animals, who lack the capacity. Animals, who are like God in being alive, are in turn superior to inanimate objects. In our ordinary, literally mundane affairs, then, the other people we encounter are the most God-like creatures around, thus deserving to be loved as much for their goodness as we love ourselves.<sup>21</sup>

Skating on even thinner ice, we are led to speculate about how to connect an ethics of love to Abelard's views about sin. This much seems clear: the Augustinian account sketched in the previous paragraph tolerates, indeed, rests on, the thought that love should vary in intensity depending on the worthiness of the object of love. Abelard's Christian argues for this thesis (*Coll.* 110–113:1826–1924; Spade 1995, 235–243). Lovers may thus err in two ways, either by investing too much love in an object not meriting it or by failing to love strongly enough something they should.<sup>22</sup> Now while degrees of mislocated love might help Abelard to explain how sins can vary in their severity, one may still wonder how this fits his analysis of sin in the cases of Grimesby and Philemon. No doubt Grimesby fastens far too much love on wealth and far too little on his victim. Philemon's love for Amanda seems harder to fault. Yet Abelard's analysis of sin brands both cases equally.

There are two components to the solution I suspect Abelard would give. The first is that what motivates Philemon's action is not genuine love but "tender-heartedness" (*miser cordia*), a natural inclination – thus not a moral virtue – that tends to work against justice and God's plans (*Coll.* 122–123.2152–2176; Spade 1995, 275–277). The second is that Abelard's account of sin is not, and is not intended to be, an account of human depravity. Grimesby displays a character more depraved than Philemon's because Grimesby's greed is not just another natural inclination like tender-heartedness. Greed is a moral vice, voluntarily acquired, disposing its possessor to sin. *Ceteris paribus* it would take considerably more effort to establish in Grimesby's soul the relations of love that constitute its ultimate human good. Yet for all of that, Abelard can maintain that Grimesby's and Philemon's consenting to homicide are equally sinful.

It may have occurred to you that we have already embarked on speculation about the content of the unfinished second book of the *Ethics*. Let me indulge myself for one more paragraph. In the second book Abelard would have maintained that moral virtues dispose us to do well but they are not what doing well is. Nor is doing well simply a matter of doing good deeds: first, because goodness attributed to deeds is parasitic on a more fundamental goodness; second, because the widow's mites count for more than the sums of the wealthy (see

Mark 12:41–44). Finally, doing well is not simply a matter of desiring to do well; if wishes were horses, beggars might ride. To do well is to consent to do well, to take on as one's own projects, insofar as one can, projects that are pleasing to God, out of love of God. Looking back at Abelard's definition of contempt of God as a model, we can ask which of these two definitions would more closely match his conception of love of God:

Love of God is to do for God's sake what *we believe* should be done by us for God's sake.

Love of God is to do for God's sake what should be done by us for God's sake.

By incorporating the agent's beliefs into it, the first definition more closely parallels Abelard's definition of contempt of God. But it also entails that one could have genuine love of God while committing atrocities, based on false beliefs, in God's name. The second definition requires of genuine love of God that the lover's actions actually comport with God's will, not some misguided conception of it. The second definition sets a loftier standard. The first definition is audacious, controversial, the sort of thing that would require defense from a brilliant if pesky philosopher. Which one would Abelard have chosen?<sup>23</sup>

#### NOTES

1. I provide references to the standard Latin editions of both works, as well as to numbered paragraphs of the translations in Spade 1995. All translations, however, are my own.
2. Abelard appears to regard irascibility and wantonness as vices due to our bodily constitution, natural liabilities that we should learn how to control. They are distinct from vices, like greed and gluttony, that are acquired, typically by sinful choices. The distinction plays no role here, but is relevant to the issue of vicious motivation; see §III.
3. For further discussion of Augustine's dualism, especially in relation to his ethics, see Mann 1999.
4. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1.3.8–1.4.10. "Inordinate desire" is Thomas Williams's translation of *libido* in Williams 1993. Although somewhat tendentious in the context, the translation has the virtues of not confining Augustine's use of *libido* to sexual passion and emphasizing that the desire in question is somehow out of order.

5. Augustine is referring to one's earthly, embodied life. His resolution foreshadows the hierarchy of values that he develops in Book II of *De libero arbitrio*; see Mann 1999, 147 for citations.
6. Thus Abelard does not use *voluntas* to refer primarily to anything as substantive as a mental faculty, something apart from but in communication, say, with another faculty called "intellect." See, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1.79, 82.
7. John Marenbon (1997a, 259) pairs this case with another one mentioned by Abelard: "Often too it happens that, attracted by her appearance, we want to lie with a woman whom we know to be married, yet by no means would we want to commit adultery with her as much as we would want her not to be married" (*Sc.* 16:16–18; Spade 1995, 32). As the context of Abelard's discussion clearly implies, we have not sinned merely in having those desires. So if the case is to parallel the master-killing servant case, we must suppose, as Marenbon does, that we actually commit adultery while wishing that our partner were not married.
8. Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, 1.12.33–34. Abelard refers to the trio of suggestion, pleasure, and consent at *Sc.* 32:23–25 (Spade 1995, 68), even though he had not hitherto mentioned suggestion.
9. Frankfurt 1971.
10. Plato, *Symposium* 200C–D.
11. Act III, scene iii.
12. Wood 1999, 61.
13. See, e.g. Audi 1999, s.v. "principle of double effect."
14. For more on this distinction in another context, see Mann 1998.
15. Abelard defines contempt negatively, as *not* doing or *not* omitting, in order to conform to the Augustinian thesis that evil is non-being. See Mann 2001.
16. One can make a case that "They would have sinned by not punishing" entails "They did not sin by punishing," especially if one is inclined to deny the possibility of moral dilemmas. For more on the topic of moral dilemmas, see the discussion of the case of the judge punishing a person the judge knows to be innocent, see 297–298 below.
17. Marenbon 1997a, 272.
18. A bishop, in Abelard's example, but the case is not materially changed if we suppose the authority not to be ecclesiastical.
19. Aquinas would later distinguish between *simpliciter* and *secundum quid* moral dilemmas. A *secundum quid* dilemma is one that arises because of previous wrongdoing on the agent's part. A *simpliciter* dilemma is one in which the agent has done no relevant previous wrong that leads to it. The judge's plight seems to be a *simpliciter* dilemma. For references and discussion, see Mann 1991.

20. Compare Abelard's observation with the 1843 M'Naghten rule defining criminal insanity. A person is criminally insane if "at the time of committing the act, the party accused was laboring under such a defect of reason, from disease of the mind, as not to know the nature and quality of the act he was doing; or if he did know it, that he did not know he was doing what was wrong" (Goldstein 1967, 45).
21. This sentiment is compatible with the beliefs that (1) humans are nevertheless a fairly miserable lot and (2) there are other created beings – angels, for example – superior to us in virtue of being immaterial. Augustine held both beliefs; see especially Books II and III of *De libero arbitrio*.
22. This is a vindication of the utility of the Augustinian notion of inordinate desire.
23. An earlier draft of this essay benefited from comments from Jeffrey Brower, Kevin Guilfooy, Scott MacDonald, Gareth B. Matthews, Christopher Taylor, and Thomas Williams.



## 10 Influence

Peter Abelard had a great influence upon his contemporaries. As he himself reports, many students followed him, and, as is clear from what we know about the history of twelfth-century logic,<sup>1</sup> his rivals could not neglect his innovating theories and discussions, feeling it necessary to develop their own theories in response to his. In the next century, however, his direct influence disappeared in logic as well as in theology. The census of Peter Abelard's works<sup>2</sup> shows that very few manuscripts from the thirteenth century preserve his works, and that there are no manuscripts at all for his logical works. He did, however, leave a school – the so-called *Nominales*, named after his own commitment to nominalism – but it survives for only one or two generations after him. As a result, Abelard is known in the next century only in connection with the name, or rather the notoriety, of the school of the *Nominales*, together with a few distinctive theories associated with it.

In this chapter, I attempt to provide some indication of Abelard's overall historical influence. I shall focus, however, on the influence he had on his contemporaries, taking up three areas of twelfth-century logic to which contributed – areas that we would nowadays think of falling within the domain of metaphysics, philosophy of language, and logic, respectively – and then examining his contemporaries' reactions to them. Along the way, however, I will also have something to say about the school of the *Nominales* and some of their distinctive theories.

I. A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
TWELFTH-CENTURY LOGIC

Let us begin with a brief sketch of the development of twelfth-century logic. Our story begins with the arrival of Peter Abelard at Paris around the very beginning of the century. Paris was at this time celebrated for logic, because of the influence and reputation of William of Champeaux. As is well known, Abelard attacked William's own theory of universals soon after his arrival, and thereby provoked what was to become a long-standing controversy. The theory of universals is but one example of the many topics in the logic of the day to which Abelard made an important contribution.

In the 1130s many masters began to gather at Paris and at Mont Ste. Geneviève and to start logic schools, including Abelard, Adam du Petit-Pont, Robert of Melun, Alberic of Paris, and Gilbert of Poitiers. Although by mid-century, these masters had all died or retired from teaching logic, their schools – the Nominales, Parvipontani, Meludinenses, Albricani, and Porretani, respectively – continued to exist, presumably at Paris, and to carry on their rivalries.<sup>3</sup> There remain, moreover, collections of theses which were held by each school.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1180s, which mark the beginning of the decline of twelfth-century logic, all five of these logical schools had disappeared, with the result that textbooks of logic from this period tend to be patchworks of material taken from this and that school.<sup>5</sup> By the very end of the century, twelfth-century logic had died altogether, and a new development of logic had started, with the appearance of the earliest terminist texts (textbooks of logic of a style which becomes very popular from the thirteenth century on). These early terminist texts consist of both a survey of the so-called "old logic" (*logica vetus*) – cutting off to an elementary level every subtlety of speculation associated with Abelard and the other twelfth-century logicians – as well as a survey of the theory of fallacies based on the newly discovered text of Aristotle, *Sophistici Elenchi*, which Abelard knew only very superficially. The terminist texts also contain chapters which are proudly entitled "the logic of the moderns" (*logica modernorum*) in contrast to the aforementioned chapters, which they refer to as "the logic of the ancients" (*logica antiquorum*). The theories discussed in the *logica modernorum* systematize theories that were already

discussed explicitly or implicitly in the second half of the twelfth century,<sup>6</sup> but few of their elements trace back to Peter Abelard.

## II. THE UNIVERSALS CONTROVERSY

The best-known topic of twelfth-century logic is, no doubt, the controversy surrounding the nature and ontological status of universals. In order to clarify Abelard's own contribution to this controversy, I shall begin with a brief historical survey of its development.

### II.1 *The historical background*

To a great extent, what lies behind the universals controversy is a new approach to logic, which is commonly referred to as *vocalism*,<sup>7</sup> and which was first propounded in the late eleventh century by a certain John, who was the master of Roscelin of Compiègne. According to this new approach, logic deals only with "voices" (*voces*) – i.e., verbal sounds – in contrast to the more traditional approach, represented in Porphyry's *Isagoge*, which holds that logic deals not only with verbal sounds, but also with things (*res*). In all probability, Roscelin was the first to apply the vocalistic approach directly to the three questions which Porphyry raises but declines to answer at the beginning of his *Isagoge* – namely, the question (i) whether universals subsist or not, (ii) if so, whether they are incorporeal or not, and (iii) if they are incorporeal, whether they are separated from or exist in bodies. Although Roscelin propounded a vocalist theory, the lack of sources makes it uncertain as to how precisely he answered Porphyry's questions. It was, however, with the vocalist theory in mind that Abelard, who had been Roscelin's student, attacked William of Champeaux's view that universals are things. As I have indicated, moreover, Abelard's attack on William initiated what was to be an on-going controversy about universals.

We should note the difference between Abelard's formulation of the problem (namely, whether universals are verbal sounds or things), and Porphyry's original questions (namely, whether universals subsist or not). Abelard's formulation is quite alien to the ancient controversy over Platonism and Aristotelianism, which is evidently reflected in Porphyry's questions. As a matter of fact, nobody in the twelfth century thought of any Platonic *idea* as separate from bodies

(*choris einaī*), and all agreed that, at least in our sensible world, there are only individuals. (A Platonic theory, which asserted *ideae* as exemplary forms in divine mind, did appear in the controversy, but outside the mainstream.<sup>8</sup>) The answer given to the Abelardian question, therefore, by vocalists (*vocales*) such as Roscelin and Abelard provided a challenge for the realists (*reales*), namely, to explain what sort of real things universals are and to conform their own theories about universal things with the foregoing assumption that only individuals exist in the sensible world.

Finally, we should also note that an important prelude to the controversy between Abelard and William is the attack of Anselm of Canterbury on Roscelin in the late eleventh century.<sup>9</sup> The occasion for Anselm's attack was Roscelin's views about the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which Anselm thinks rest on a mistaken view of universals. In any case, Anselm has no problem introducing the term "essence" (*essentia*) to explain how one and the same universal (or essence) can be in many different individuals that exist only in the sensible world. Now it is possible to distinguish two meanings of the term "essence," corresponding to each of the two meanings of verb "to be" (*esse*): (i) *to be or to exist*, when it is used as a free-standing predicate, and (ii) *to be something*, when it is used as a copula. Now, for Anselm, it is only God who *exists* in a pure sense, whereas creatures always exist in a qualified or a restricted way as *being something*. In respect of God, therefore, "essence" can only mean *some existing thing*, whereas in respect of creatures it can only mean *being something*. Thus, according to Anselm, a species, such as *man*, is a universal essence derived from a qualified or restricted way of being, such as Socrates's being *man*, Plato's being *man*, and so on.<sup>10</sup> In this way, he suggests, a universal essence (that is, a species or genus), such as *man* or *animal*, can be one and the same thing even while existing in many different individuals.

## II.2 *Controversy between Abelard and William of Champeaux*

After these preliminaries, let us turn to the controversy between Abelard and William of Champeaux. According to Abelard's own report in his *Historia calamitatum* (HC 65.85–91; Radice 1974, 60), William began his career by asserting that universals are things – or more specifically that *essentially* the same things (namely, genus and

species) are totally present in each individual. The young Abelard attacked this theory, forcing William to reject it in favor of another theory, according to which universals are *indifferently* the same things, as opposed to being *essentially* the same. For convenience, let us call the former theory the *material essence theory*, and the latter the *indifference theory*. Abelard's report about his exchanges is well supported by various other sources. Although there is no Porphyry-commentary that defends the material essence theory as such, there are several commentaries that report this theory and Abelard's arguments against it.<sup>11</sup>

Briefly stated, the material essence theory maintains that the same essence is present in different individuals of the same species and in different species of the same genus – indeed, the essence just is the species or genus in such cases. Now the essence in each case is referred to as the matter (*materia*) of the individuals and species, and the matter is said to become an individual or a species when it is combined with certain forms (*formae*) – certain accidents in the case of individuals (namely, those peculiar to the individual in question), and certain substantial differences in the case of species (namely, those definitive of the species in question). Thus, the essence *man* becomes an individual, say Socrates, when it is combined with the accidents that are peculiar to Socrates, and the essence *animal* becomes the species *man* when it is combined with the substantial differences that are definitive of *man*, namely, rationality and mortality. Although William is responsible for introducing the terms “matter” and “form,”<sup>12</sup> he clearly borrowed the term “essence” from Anselm of Canterbury. We should note, however, that William's use of “essence” loses the subtle distinction that Anselm had drawn between the existence of God and that of creatures. William's use of “essence” is ambiguous, or rather it seems simply to mean *some existing thing*. Abelard's attack on the material essence theory takes advantage of this very ambiguity or simplification. Indeed, Abelard's attack is tantamount to saying that if one and the same universal, *u*, is in different individuals, *I*<sub>1</sub> and *I*<sub>2</sub>, as their matter, then *u* in *I*<sub>1</sub> and *u* in *I*<sub>2</sub> cannot be the same thing, since *I*<sub>1</sub> and *I*<sub>2</sub> are different things, as William himself admits.<sup>13</sup> The indifference theory, which William eventually adopts, attempts to avoid this consequence by asserting, not the sheer sameness of *u*, but the sameness of *u* in the sense that there is no intrinsic difference between *u* in *I*<sub>1</sub> and *u* in *I*<sub>2</sub>, although the two *u*'s are different things in themselves.

### II.3 *Realist theories prior to 1130*

Abelard's attack on the material essence theory was extremely successful, though it did not succeed in persuading people to accept his own theory that universals are mere verbal sounds. Indeed, at this point in the controversy, Abelard himself had not yet developed his own theory fully enough to explain precisely the sense in which universals are *voces*. His early glosses on Porphyry (*IP Isag.* and P7<sup>14</sup>), for example, which were written at around the time of his initial attacks on William, do not even touch on such questions at all. In order to resist Abelard's position, therefore, realists initially thought it was sufficient to appeal to authorities, such as Aristotle, Porphyry, and Boethius, who support the realist position at various places in their writings. Although Abelard gradually elaborated his theory in a semantic direction – eventually speaking of meaningful words (*sermones*) rather than verbal sounds (*voces*) – realists stuck to the traditional conviction that universals are things (*res*), and continued to defend a form of William's indifference theory.

In his *Glossae super Porphyrium*,<sup>15</sup> after attacking William's material essence theory, Abelard turns to a discussion of two versions of the indifference theory that emerge from the original formulation of it, which we may refer to, respectively, as “the *collectio* theory” and “the *status* theory.”<sup>16</sup> According to John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* II.17, these two theories are propounded by Jocelin of Soissons and Walter of Mortagne, respectively. Jocelin of Soissons taught at the cathedral school of Paris from c. 1110 to c. 1113, before Abelard took the position, and his view is preserved in a work composed by his student, *De generibus et speciebus*. The *collectio* theory asserts that a universal, say *man*, which is *indifferently* the same but *essentially* different in individual human beings, is a collection of the essentially different cases of *man* in all the individuals (namely, *man*<sub>1</sub>, *man*<sub>2</sub>, *man*<sub>3</sub>, etc.). The *status* theory is presented in two texts: *Tractatus de generali et speciali statu rerum universalium* and an unpublished Porphyry commentary (P17).<sup>17</sup> It asserts that an individual, say Socrates, is an individual insofar as it is Socrates, or following their terminology *secundum status* of Socrates; that it is also its species, namely, *man*, insofar as it is *man*, or in the *status* of *man*; and so on for genera, such as *animal*, and each of the ten categories. According to the *status* theory, therefore, there are as many

universals as individuals, since *man* in Socrates is a different thing from *man* in Plato, although in the *status* of *man* they are *indifferently* the same as each other. Interestingly, the *status* and *collectio* theories both retain William's terminology of "matter" and "form" as well as "indifference."

In his *Logica "nostrorum petitori sociorum,"* Abelard no longer mentions the *collectio* theory. Instead, after discussing the other two realist theories – namely, material essence theory (LNPS 515.14–518.8) and *status* theory (LNPS 518.9–521.20) – he adds another realist theory (LNPS 521.21–522.9).<sup>18</sup> His discussion of this third theory is too brief to make clear what the theory amounts to. However, in the *Tractatus de generali et speciali statu rerum*, which also omits the *collectio* theory, there is some discussion of another realist theory.<sup>19</sup> According to the *Tractatus*, this third realist theory distinguishes three different uses of the term "man." For it can be used (1) for *man* simply (*simplex* or *in sua simplicitate*); (2) for that which is associated with individual human beings (*circa inferiora*); or (3) for individual human beings themselves (*inferioratus*). In the first sense, *man* neglects the forms that distinguish individual human beings, as when we say "*man* is a species"; in the second sense, it focuses on individual cases of *man* in individuals, as when we say "*man* is an animal"; and in the third sense, *man* is used to for individual human beings themselves, as when we say "Socrates" or "Plato."

A very similar theory is developed in the *Sententia de universalibus secundum magistrum R*. It begins by mentioning the grammatical distinction between proper and appellative (= common) nouns and, appealing to the authority of Priscian, asserting that an appellative noun, say "man," refers to (*nominat*) individual human beings, but signifies (*significat*) a universal nature, namely, *rational mortal animal* (§2). It then asserts that an appellative noun can function as a proper noun, namely, when it signifies in its simplicity (*in sua simplicitate*), rather than in respect of individuals (*in inferioribus*), as is the case when we say "*man* is a species," not in its individuals (*in inferioribus*) (§3). Here we see an evident parallelism of terminology between the *Tractatus* and the *Sententia*. Therefore, let us refer to the realist theory in question as Master R.'s, whoever he might have been.<sup>20</sup>

The *Sententia secundum magistrum R*. distinguishes *man* as the potential matter of individuals, when "*man*" is used as a proper name

(§4), and *man* as the actual matter, when “*man*” is used as an appellative noun (§5). Then, the *Sententia* says, *man* and *this man* are different by proper nature; *this man* is the actual matter of Socrates and is actually the same as Socrates, but precedes Socrates by nature since it can exist without Socrateity (the forms which make the potential matter *man* Socrates) (§6). This explanation of the distinction between *man* and *this man* is strongly reminiscent of the third form of realism mentioned by Abelard in his *Logica “nostrorum petitioni sociorum.”* I conclude, therefore, that the theory Abelard has in mind there is the theory of Master R.

Now, the unpublished commentary, P17, which adheres to the *status* theory, also mentions this other realist theory as one of its rivals. According to P17, some realists assert that *essentially* the same *animal* is the matter of both Socrates and Brownyn (a name of a fictitious ass), which is just William’s material essence theory. However, according to P17, these realists also assert that a universal in its simple nature (*in simplici natura*) is opposed (*oppositum esse*) to its singulars, but a universal affected by individual forms is the same as its singulars,<sup>21</sup> the very theory of master R. In the end, therefore, William’s material essence theory is similar to the theory of Master R., but not the same. Master R. never uses the terms “essentially the same” as William does. The fact that the *Logica “nostrorum petitioni sociorum,”* the *Tractatus*, and P17 mention the theory of Master R. and that they all omit the *collectio* theory, strongly suggests that the *collectio* theory was outdated by the 1120s and from then on Master R. actually propounded a new theory as part of a counterattack of William’s realist party against Abelard.

#### II.4 Controversy in the mid-twelfth century

Philosophers continue to develop various theories of universals in the mid-twelfth century, and here again Abelard’s influence can be detected. For present purposes, a brief survey of the various theories will have to suffice.

Abelard’s followers, the Nominales, continued to develop his most mature theory, according to which “universals are meaningful words (*sermones*),” though they tended to use terms like *termini* instead of *sermones*.<sup>22</sup>



Gilbert of Poitiers and his followers, the Porretani, assert that a universal is a collection of forms in individuals each of which forms makes its subject (an individual) what it is. Thus, *man* or *white* is a collection of such forms in individuals, which make, say, Socrates a man or white. This theory is in a sense a revival of the *collectio* theory of Jocelin of Soissons. In the case of Gilbert and his followers, however, the theory was developed in a much more subtle theological and ontological context.<sup>23</sup>

John of Salisbury (*Metalogicon* II.17) reports that some teachers focus on the *status* of things, identifying them with genera and species. (Note that this theory is different from the aforementioned *status* theory of Walter of Mortagne, which does not identify *status* as universals.) In all probability these are the Meludinenses, followers of Robert of Melun. According to the *Ars Meliduna*, words (*dictiones*) signify common and private *status*, which are able to be participated in by many (namely, in the case of common nouns) or by one (namely, in the case of proper nouns<sup>24</sup>) – though in reading these works it is important to recognize that “signifying” (*significare*) is being used in such a way as to contrast with “referring” (*appellare*). The same work also asserts that universals are things able to be grasped by intellect and to be participated in by many.<sup>25</sup>

John of Salisbury also reports that there are some who explain universals with a new-fangled term *maneria/maneries*, whose precise meaning is unclear, even to John (though in other contexts it often means something like *type*). P21 and/or P20<sup>26</sup> hold the *maneries* theory, sometimes drawing a contrast between *maneria rerum* (universals) and *res maneriei* (individuals).<sup>27</sup> I would argue that the *maneria* theory was held by the Parvipontani.<sup>28</sup> For the same type of phrasing used to draw this contrast in P21 and/or P20 is also found in the *Fallaciae* Parvipontani,<sup>29</sup> as well as in the *Speculum speculationum* of Alexander Nequam,<sup>30</sup> a former student of the school of the Petit-Pont.<sup>31</sup>

With the exception of a *notio* theory mentioned by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon* II.17, of which we know little,<sup>32</sup> and of John’s own theory in *Metalogicon* II.20, these are the only theories of universals we know to have been propounded in the mid-twelfth century. It is worth mentioning that all these theories in the mid-twelfth century discuss universals in relation to predication just

as Abelard does. To my knowledge, moreover, only the faint memory of the Parvipontani's term *maneria* and the label of *Nominales* survive into the next century.<sup>33</sup>

### III. ABELARD'S SEMANTICS AND ITS INFLUENCE

In developing his theory of universals, Abelard articulated a distinctive approach to semantical issues. And although his theory of universals was not accepted by his rivals, his semantical views were influential in many respects. Here I shall take up several topics as examples.

#### III.1 Signification

In *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle defines a noun, a verb, or a sentence as a "sound significant by convention" (*vox significativa ad placitum*).<sup>34</sup> In order to illuminate Aristotle's meaning, Boethius gives some examples of non-significant sounds in his commentary, namely, phonemes (*litterae*) and the nonsense word *blityri* (*In De in. maior* 5.9, 14). In addition to these Boethian examples, William of Champeaux includes the names of fictitious things like "chimaera," "goat-stag," and so on. This is indicative of the fact that, by the late eleventh century, the significative function of words is closely identified with their denotation of things existing in the real world. Although people in William's day did define "signifying" as "producing understandings in our mind" (*generare intellectum*), they took these understandings to be only understandings of existing things.

Abelard noticed that William's interpretation of signification contradicts what Aristotle says in his *De interpretatione* (I, 16a16–17), namely, that "'goat-stag' signifies something." He points out in his *Dialectica* that this passage of Aristotle suggests that "goat-stag" is significant. He thus distinguishes signification from denotation (*nominatio*), saying that although "goat-stag" names (*nominat*) nothing existing in the world, it is nonetheless significant (*Dial.* 127.28–32).

Now on this point it may be that Abelard was simply following the vocalist tradition. Another contemporary vocalist, Garlandus of Besançon,<sup>35</sup> touches on the idea that "goat-stag" is significant.<sup>36</sup>

Abelard's interpretation of signification soon enjoyed widespread acceptance. Fictitious names were never again to appear as examples of non-significant sounds in later *Perihermenias* commentaries nor indeed in any of the logic textbooks throughout the twelfth century.

### III.2 *Declension of nouns and signification*

Aristotle says that oblique cases of a noun "are not nouns but cases of a noun" (*De int.* 2, 16a32-b1).<sup>37</sup> From a semantic point of view, however, it seems that one should say rather that declensions of nouns according to case, gender, and number make no difference whatsoever with respect to their signification. In all probability, Abelard was the first to propose this anti-Aristotelian view (cf. *Dial.* 124.36–125.15). Thus, in commenting on the words of Aristotle quoted above, Abelard says that Aristotle thinks cases are different from nouns in a strict sense, but one can at the same time assert that oblique cases of a noun are the same as their nominative insofar as we pay attention to the identification of signification, not to the construction of sentences (*LI De in.* 33.02.56–69, G 343.40–344.17). Two later *Perihermenias* commentaries written by realists (H15 and H10) follow Abelard on this point and say that Aristotle in fact intends to be giving a two-fold definition of nouns, a loose one which includes oblique cases as nouns, and a strict one which excludes them.

The *Introductiones Montanae maiores*, which reports the teachings of Alberic of Paris, a bitter opponent of the nominalist school, also substantially follows Abelard on this issue. It asserts that "*Socratis*" ("Socrates" in the genitive case), "*Socrati*" ("Socrates" in the dative case), and so on are names of Socrates, but that Socrates does not have many names, because although "*Socratis*" is not the same as "*Socratem*" in ending, nonetheless it is the same as it in signification.<sup>38</sup> The *Compendium logicae Porretanum*, a work by a Porretanus, also asserts (Thesis 1.2) that many verbal sounds, namely, different cases of a noun, are the same term, and (Thesis 1.3) that different genders of an adjective are the same noun.<sup>39</sup>

According to the *Ars Meliduna*, a work by a Melidunensis, several theories about the relationship of oblique cases to nouns in the corresponding nominative were proposed in the third quarter of the

twelfth century: (1) that oblique cases differ from nouns in the corresponding nominative, since their endings are different; (2) that oblique cases are neither the same as nor different from such nouns; and (3) that oblique cases are the same as their corresponding nominative, because their signification is the same. The *Ars Meliduna* divides this third position into two species: (3a) oblique cases are not only the same noun as their corresponding nominative but also the same verbal sound; and (3b) oblique cases are the same noun as their nominative, but different verbal sounds. The *Ars Meliduna* itself adheres to theory (3a).

The *Introductiones Parvipontanae* (in MS Berlin, lat. oct. 262)<sup>40</sup> follows Aristotle in asserting that only nominatives are nouns, and thus excludes oblique cases from this category, because the imposition of nouns is made in the nominative.<sup>41</sup> I suggest that this treatise is a work of a Parvipontanus, since it holds a theory of arguments peculiar to that school.<sup>42</sup>

Except for the Parvipontani, therefore, all the schools active in the second half of the twelfth century followed Abelard on this issue in one way or another. The next century retains the memory of these views in the form of the claim "'albus', 'alba', 'album' are the same noun," although during the thirteenth century it is always falsely ascribed only to the nominalist sect in a negative tone.

### III.3 *Appellatio*

In his *Dialectica*, as I mentioned above in §III.1, Abelard uses the term *nominare* for denotation or reference in the modern sense of the term, rather than for meaning in general (*significare*). The term *nominare* originates from the grammar of the earlier period, namely, the *Glosulae* to the Priscian minor, and was introduced in order to gloss Priscian's definition of nouns, according to which the property of a noun is to signify substance with quality (*Inst. Gr.* II.18, 55.6). According to the *Glosulae*, Priscian's definition may be paraphrased as follows: a noun names (*nominat*) only substance (= subject matter) and signifies (*significat*) a quality belonging to (*circa*) the substance.<sup>43</sup> For example, "man" names an individual human being and signifies, or determines, a quality (namely, humanity) belonging to it. Abelard comes to use the term *appellare* rather than *nominare* in his *Logica*

“nostrorum petitori sociorum.”<sup>44</sup> The term *appellare* is, presumably, derived from Priscian’s *nomen appellativum*, but Abelard is the first logician, to my knowledge, to use the term.

Abelard argues elsewhere (*LI De in.* 3.03.28–34, G 348.37–351.2; cf. also *Dial.* 139.12–31 and 248.7–249.37) as follows. In order to save the rules of conversion of past- or future-tensed propositions, as well the rules for syllogisms containing them, we must consider that in a proposition such as:

(1) <somebody> old was young,

the expression “was young” does not consist of two different words, but functions as if it consisted only one. Otherwise, for example, its simple conversion

(2) <somebody> young was old

should be true if (1) is true. As a matter of fact, he says, the simple conversion of (1) is not (2), but

(3) somebody who was young is old,

which is indeed true. The *Introductiones Montanae minores* attacks this discussion of Abelard’s, saying that “our master,” Alberic of Paris, simply asserts that the rule of conversion does not hold in the case of such propositions.<sup>45</sup> This is the beginning of the discussion of what sort of denotation subject and predicate terms have in propositions of various tenses, although the term *appellatio* is not invoked at this point.

In the second half of the century texts appear that provide many rules to show what sort of denotation terms have in propositions of various tenses or contexts. For example, the *Ars Meliduna* 1, a product of the Melidunenses and dated to the 1170s, provides such rules in a part entitled *De appellatione*.<sup>46</sup> Again the *Tractatus Anagnini* III<sup>47</sup> and another treatise (in MS Vienna, Nationalbibl., VPL 2237, ff. 31v–34v)<sup>48</sup> provides the same sort of discussion, though this time under the title of *De suppositionibus*. Substantially the same rules, though greatly reduced in number, also appear in later terminist texts in chapters entitled *De appellatione*.

## IV. INFERENCES

Medieval logicians inherited from Boethius a distinction between two kinds of inferences, namely, topical inferences and syllogisms (the latter of which were further subdivided into categorical and hypothetical). Boethius expresses both kinds of inferences as of the form “. . . , therefore. . .” By the end of the eleventh century, however, philosophers such as William of Champeaux had come to express these inferences as of the form “if . . . , then . . .”<sup>49</sup> That is to say, for William, all inferences are simply conditional propositions of various types. Against this background, Peter Abelard scrutinized inferential forms in detail and drew some particular conclusions, which provoked various reactions among his rivals and their schools.

IV.1 *What is an argument?*

In his *Super Topica glossae* (LI Top. 296.13–23), Abelard maintains that an argument (*argumentum*) is a proposition (*propositio*) introduced to prove a question. For example, in the proof

(P) Socrates is *man*, therefore Socrates is *animal*,

the proposition “Socrates is *man*” is the argument introduced to settle the question of whether or not Socrates is *animal*. By “a proposition (or argument)” Abelard means nothing but verbal sounds (*voces*).

In the course of discussing this view he mentions two other theories of arguments: (a) that an argument is that which is signified or generated in our mind by the proposition, and (b) that an argument is the very thing which has the force of inference, so that, e.g., *man* is the argument in (P), since it is what enables us to infer *animal* in the conclusion. The second of these two theories, (b), is William of Champeaux's.<sup>50</sup> Abelard rejects William's theory in his *Dialectica* (461.3–462.2), but the *Dialectica* is an earlier work and it is not yet very clear whether Abelard himself takes arguments to be merely verbal sounds or the things signified by them (cf. *Dial.* 459.26–461.2). As for theory (a), it is developed in two commentaries on Boethius' *Topics* (namely, B8 and B9).<sup>51</sup> We do not know yet the authors of these commentaries or who in fact asserted theory (a), but it is safe to suppose that the theory was propounded between Abelard's

writing of the *Dialectica* (before 1117) and the *Super Topica glossae* (c. 1120).

Now at this stage of its development, the question "what is an argument?" is closely connected with another, namely, "what is a *locus*?" where "*locus*" is defined by Boethius as "the seat of arguments" (*De top. diff.* 1174D9). And the latter question is itself closely connected with the famous problem of universals. For example, William asserts that a universal thing (*res*), *man*, is both the argument and the *locus* in a proof such as (P). And, it was Abelard who introduced the tri-partite distinction between things (*res*), understandings (*intellectus*), and words or other verbal sounds (*voces*) into the universal controversy. Unfortunately, however, at the present stage of research, we cannot pursue these connections more precisely. We must satisfy ourselves, therefore, with a brief survey of the extant commentaries on Boethius's *Topics* in the pioneering work of N. J. Green-Pedersen.<sup>52</sup>

According to Abelard, those who assert theory (a) argue that mere verbal sounds without understanding are not sufficient to prove anything (*LI Top.* 296.23–35). Abelard, however, answers this argument in one way as follows. If the understanding of premises alone were sufficient to prove anything, then there would be no use in overtly expressing any conclusion! Abelard also develops many other counter-arguments or his responses in his *Super Topica glossae* (for other counter-arguments, see *LI Top.* 296.35–298.22). Indeed, it was in the face of theory (a) that Abelard sharpened his own theory into the more "nominalistic" one, namely, that arguments are premises which are merely verbal, a thesis that was taken up and defended by the Nominales in the mid-twelfth century.

In response to Abelard's nominalism about arguments, all the rival schools assert that arguments are *dicta*, or items signified by propositions in one way or another.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know the arguments against Abelard's thesis developed by his rival schools, except in the case of the Meludinenses. Thus, the *Ars Meliduna* argues that because verbal expressions are conventional, the premise "Socrates is *man*," from which the conclusion "therefore Socrates is *animal*" is supposed to be drawn, cannot be merely verbal. For if it were verbal and therefore conventional, it could also mean the same as "Socrates is *stone*,"<sup>54</sup> in which case the conclusion would not follow. In light of considerations such as these, the Meludinenses assert

that arguments are true *dicta* of premises, so that, e.g., the argument in (P) is the *dictum* of the premise “Socrates is *man*,” namely, that Socrates is *man* (*Socratem esse hominem*).

Alberic of Paris and his school assert that arguments are *dicta* of general hypothetical propositions,<sup>55</sup> so that, e.g., the argument in (P) is the *dictum* of the hypothetical proposition:

If something is *man*, it is *animal*.

According to the Albricani, this *dictum* is the argument, not only of (P), but of many other proofs of the same type:

Plato is *man*, therefore Plato is *animal*,

and so on. This theory is, in a sense, a revival of William of Champeaux's theory. For according to both William and Alberic, the force of inference in this type of inferences lies with *man*, namely, the predicate of the premise.

As for the Porretani, they assert<sup>56</sup> that arguments are relations (*habitudines*) of middle terms to either subjects or predicates, so that, e.g., the argument in (P) is the relation which *man* as a species has to *animal* as a genus, namely, the relation which is expressed by the maxim (*maxima propositio*):

Of whatever a species is predicated,  
so is its genus.

We may say that this theory is also a revival, in another sense, of William's theory. For William, the thing *man* is the argument, as well as *locus*, for (P), but not insofar as it considered in itself. Rather *man* is the argument (and the *locus*) only insofar as it has a relation to its conclusion.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the Parvipontani assert that arguments are the *dicta* of special hypothetical propositions, so that, e.g., the argument in (P) is the *dictum* of the hypothetical proposition derived from (P) itself, namely

If Socrates is *man*, Socrates is *animal*.

All of these considerations disappear with the arrival of terminist texts, which simply follow, without any further ado, Boethius's definition of argument: *ratio rei dubiae faciens fidem* (“reason producing belief in something that was in doubt”).



#### IV.2 *Syllogisms vs. topical inferences*

As I have said, William of Champeaux<sup>58</sup> treats topical inferences and syllogisms (both categorical and hypothetical) as various types of conditional propositions. Thus, he treats topical inferences as conditionals consisting of two categoricals (namely, “if {a categorical}, then {another categorical}”), categorical syllogisms as conditionals consisting of a categorical and a conditional (namely, “if {a categorical}, then if {a categorical} then {a categorical}”), and hypothetical syllogisms as conditionals consisting of hypotheticals (namely, “if {a hypothetical}, then {a hypothetical}”). William also introduces new non-Boethian *loci* (from subject/predicate and from antecedent/consequent) to validate those inferences.

Unlike William, Abelard makes a clear distinction between topical arguments and syllogisms, arguing that syllogisms need no support from *loci*. In his *Dialectica* (352.29–353.23), Abelard argues for the distinction as follows. Suppose, as William argues, that a syllogism had to be validated by this *locus* from predicates:

If something (M) is predicated of another (S) universally,  
then if some other (P) is predicated of the predicate (M) universally,  
P is predicated, too, of S universally.<sup>59</sup>

In that case, this *locus* could be applied to a syllogism consisting of any terms, including:

If every man is a stone,  
then if every stone is an ass, every man is an ass.

William and his followers would agree that the *locus* of this syllogism is *stone* (since, as we have seen, for William a *locus* is the thing signified by the middle term). But if *stone* carries the force of inference by virtue of its being predicated of *man*, the question arises whether the predication holds in virtue of the way things exist in the world or in virtue of the mere utterance of verbal sounds (*secundum rerum cohaerentiam sive secundum vocum enuntiationem*). It appears that it must be in virtue of one of them, and yet William could not accept either.

Abelard, thus, clearly distinguishes syllogisms from topical arguments, saying that the former are perfect in the sense that their validity derives from the combination of terms (*complexio*) itself,

whereas the latter need a topical validation and so are imperfect (*Dial.* 253.28–257.23). Consider, for example, the topical inference:

If Socrates is *man*, Socrates is *animal*,

In order for this hypothetical to be true, says Abelard, we need a *locus*, that is, a relationship between *man* and *animal*, or more generally, a relationship between a species and its genus. By contrast, syllogisms of the form

(F1) If every M is P and every S is M, then every S is P,

will always be true solely in virtue of the combinations of terms, since whatever terms we substitute for “S,” “M,” and “P,” the conditional comes out true.

Here we need to be careful to distinguish two points. First, Abelard does deny that syllogisms take the form of the conditionals suggested by William, namely:

(F2) If every M is P,  
then if every S is M, every S is P.

Nonetheless, he does not deny that they take the form suggested by (F1). Even so, it remains unclear whether Abelard distinguishes between syllogistic conditionals like (F1) and syllogistic inferences of the form

(F3) Every M is P,  
every S is M,  
therefore every S is P.

Abelard does eventually argue, in his *Super Topica glossae* (*LI Top.* 323.5–328.37), that syllogisms, and in general argumentation of the form

(F4) {premise(s) = *argumentum*}, therefore {a conclusion},

are not conditionals at all. Conditionals, he says, have a single meaning which derives from its constituents being united by a conjunction such as “if.” On the other hand, he says, the conjunction “therefore” does not make a single meaning from antecedent(s) and its consequent, but merely links them as premise(s) and the conclusion respectively. In his long and complicated discussions of this issue, Abelard seems to struggle to show that conditionals of the form (F1)

and  $(F_2)$  are on a different level than inferences of the form of  $(F_3)$  and  $(F_4)$ .

These arguments of Abelard stimulated many rival masters. First, there is the teaching of Alberic of Paris, at least as it is reported in the *Introductiones Montanae maiores*. According to the *Introductiones*, Alberic introduces rules of all types –  $(F_1)$ ,  $(F_2)$ , and  $(F_3)$  – with respect to the first three moods of the first figure of syllogisms. In discussing the second mood of the first figure, the *Introductiones*<sup>60</sup> says that Abelard refuses to accept any rules of form indicated by  $(F_2)$ , on the grounds of counter-arguments such as the following:

If there is no flower,  
then if a rose is a flower, there is not a rose.

This counter-argument cannot be found in Abelard's extant works, and is difficult to understand. According to the *Introductiones*, Abelard thinks the conditional is false because, while the antecedent is true, the consequent is false – which is, perhaps, just to say: “there is no flower” can be true, say in winter, while the consequent is false, since “a rose is a flower” is always true, whereas “there is not a rose” can be false, say in spring. Thus, the *Introductiones* says, Abelard denies that any hypotheticals follow from categoricals or vice versa. In the face of such counter-arguments, Alberic responds that such hypotheticals can be true, but only when their terms are such that the subjects cannot exist without the predicates.

The *Introductiones* also argues elsewhere<sup>61</sup> against “the error of somebody” who maintains that syllogisms of type  $(F_3)$  are the same as conditionals of type  $(F_1)$ . This view is mistaken, the *Introductiones* says, because it often happens that conditionals of type  $(F_1)$  are true, whereas the corresponding syllogisms are false in virtue of the falsity of one of their premises. Consider, for example, the following conditional:

If every man is a stone and every stone is imperceptible,  
then every man is imperceptible.

This conditional is always true, but the syllogism corresponding to it is false. The *Introductiones* then assigns *loci* to syllogisms, pointing out that the *loci* are not introduced for the sake of confirming the syllogisms, as some (namely, Abelard) falsely maintain, but rather for the sake of showing how to invent them.

As for the Porretani, they concede that in syllogisms of type ( $F_3$ ), the conclusion does follow necessarily from the syllogistic combination of terms (*sillogistica dispositio*), but assert that necessity involved is due not so much to the combination of terms as to entailment (*consecutio*).<sup>62</sup> The *Ars Meliduna* briefly asserts that *loci* should be assigned to syllogisms, because syllogisms have a twofold necessity, one from the combination of terms, the other from *loci*.<sup>63</sup> Both of these two schools ultimately reject Abelard's final conclusion that syllogisms of type ( $F_3$ ) and ( $F_4$ ) are on a different level from the conditionals of type ( $F_1$ ) and ( $F_2$ ). The *Compendium logicae Porretanum* discusses syllogisms in part II, of which the subjects are propositions, and the *Ars Meliduna* discusses them in Part IV, of which the subjects are *enuntiabilia*, or the items signified by propositions.<sup>64</sup> I know of no sources that report the position of the Parvipontani.

As a whole, the concept of "combination of terms" which Abelard proposes is widely accepted, but many sources assert against Abelard that syllogisms have twofold necessity.<sup>65</sup> And in early terminist texts, syllogisms are dealt with only in the form ( $F_3$ ), and have nothing more to say about conditionals.

### IV.3 No negatives follow from affirmatives

As mentioned above, William of Champeaux introduces certain non-Boethian *loci*, such as the *locus* from subject/predicate etc. At the same time, he also reduces the number of *loci differentia* enumerated by Boethius in his *De differentiis topicis* to five: namely, from the whole (*a toto*), from the part (*a parte*), from the equal (*a pari*), from opposites (*ab oppositis*), and from immediates (*ab immediatis*).<sup>66</sup> Although he does not explicitly say why he treats only these five, the explanation is perhaps that he is interested only in those *loci* which give necessary or at least probable conditionals, as Abelard reports (*Dial.* 271.38).

In his *Dialectica*, Abelard discusses these and some other *loci*, putting each to the test of whether it produces necessary conditionals. The discussion in which Abelard attempts to show that conditionals from *locus ab oppositis* are not necessary in particular provokes much debate.<sup>67</sup>

In order to follow Abelard's discussion, it will be useful to highlight certain rules it presupposes:

- (a) If  $x$  is  $A$ , then  $x$  is not  $A$ 's opposite (*locus ab opposito*).
- (b) If  $x$  is  $A \ \& \ B$ ,  $x$  is  $A$  [or is  $B$ ].
- (c) If  $x$  is not  $A$  [or is not  $B$ ],  $x$  is not ( $A \ \& \ B$ ).
- (d)  $P \rightarrow Q$ , therefore not  $Q \rightarrow$  not  $P$ .
- (e)  $P \rightarrow Q$ ,  $Q \rightarrow R$ , therefore  $P \rightarrow R$ .

Using these rules, Abelard argues as follows.<sup>68</sup>

- (A1) 1 If Socrates is (*man and stone*), Socrates is *man*. [by (b)]  
 2 If Socrates is *man*, Socrates is not *stone*. [by (a)]  
 ∴ 3 If Socrates is (*man and stone*), Socrates is not *stone*. [from  
 1 and 2 by (e)]  
 4 If Socrates is not *stone*, Socrates is not (*man and stone*). [by  
 (c)]  
 ∴ 5 If Socrates is (*man and stone*), Socrates is not (*man and  
 stone*). [from 3 and 4 by (e)]

Thus, if a conditional from (a) *locus ab oppositis* – such as that at 2 – is allowed, then a contradiction can be deduced. Therefore, the *locus ab oppositis* is not valid.

On the basis of arguments such as this one, Abelard and his followers, the Nominales, refuse to accept the necessity of conditionals like 2, and instead propose the following thesis:

No negatives follow from affirmatives,

and vice versa:

No affirmatives follow from negatives.

Alberic of Paris argues against this view as follows. First of all, he says, rule (b) does not hold; a conditional such as 1 is not a proposition at all, but consists of many propositions (*multiplex*), one of which is true, namely, "Socrates is *man*," and the other of which is false, namely, "Socrates is *stone*."<sup>69</sup> Secondly, rule (e) should be understood not in such a way that proposition  $Q$  plays the role of a middle term, but rather in such a way that the predicate term of  $Q$  plays this role. In other words, rule (e) should be understood as follows:

If a predicate causes something else to be predicated of its subject,  
 which in turn causes a third to be predicated,  
 then the first thing causes the third to be predicated.

We can put this more schematically as follows:

- If something is *x*, then it is *y*,  
 if something is *y*, it is *z*,  
 ∴ if something is *x*, it is *z*.<sup>70</sup>

Third and finally, if we accept rule (e), we get into trouble even without assuming (a), as the following argument clearly indicates:<sup>71</sup>

- o' If Socrates is *man*, Socrates is *animal*. [true assumption]  
 1' If Socrates is (*man* and non-*animal*), Socrates is not *animal*. [by (b)]  
 2' If Socrates is not *animal*, Socrates is not *man*. [from o' by (d)]  
 ∴ 3' If Socrates is (*man* and non-*animal*), Socrates is not *man*. [from 1' and 2' by (e)]  
 4' If Socrates is not *man*, Socrates is not (*man* and non-*animal*). [3' by (c)]  
 ∴ 5' If Socrates is (*man* and non-*animal*), Socrates is not (*man* and non-*animal*). [from 3' and 4' by (e)]

Like Alberic of Paris, Gilbert of Poitiers asserts that conditionals are not necessary when there is opposition in their antecedents, as in the case of 1 above.<sup>72</sup> His followers, the Porretani, assert<sup>73</sup> more generally that it does not follow that  $(P \ \& \ Q) \rightarrow P$  [or  $Q$ ], since if one says

If Socrates is *man* and Socrates is *ass*, Socrates is *man*,

'Socrates is *ass*' plays no role in the inference from the antecedent to the consequent (*non est causa*), and thus commits the fallacy of *non causa ut causa*. Conditionals conforming to rule (b), such as 1, or

If Socrates is *man* and *ass*, Socrates is *man*

cannot be true at all. Thus, Porretani assert, those who accept (b), namely, Nominales, should admit that a contradiction follows from (b), as can be seen from the following argument:<sup>74</sup>

- (A2) 1'' If Socrates is (Socrates and Plato), Socrates is Plato. [by (b)]  
 2'' If Socrates is Plato, Socrates is not Socrates. [by (a)]  
 ∴ 3'' If Socrates is (Socrates and Plato), Socrates is not Socrates. [from 1'' and 2'' by (e)]  
 4'' But if Socrates is (Socrates and Plato), Socrates is Socrates. [by (b)]  
 ∴ 5'' If Socrates is (Socrates and Plato), Socrates is Socrates and Socrates is not Socrates. [from 3'' and 4'']

As for the Meludinenses, they judge that premise 1 is false, asserting the thesis:<sup>75</sup>

Nothing follows from the false.

Thus, against those who do not accept this thesis, the *Ars Meliduna* argues that, it is possible to prove (i) that a proposition follows from its contradiction, (ii) that two propositions contradictory to each other follow from the same proposition, and (iii) a proposition (P) follows from another (Q), while both P and Q cannot be true together. In support of (i), the *Ars Meliduna* gives a number of arguments, including (A1) above. In support of (ii), it gives, among others, an argument very similar to (A2) above. In support of (iii), however, it argues as follows:

If there is everything, there is not nothing. [by (a)]  
 If there is not everything, there is nothing. [by (a)]  
 ∴ If there is or is not everything, there is or is not nothing.

What an awkward argument! Not surprisingly, the terms “everything” and “nothing” become the focus of attention in *Sophismata* literature from the thirteenth century on.

It is worth noting that in support of (ii), the *Ars Meliduna* also gives the following argument.

If Socrates speaks truly and he lies, Socrates lies,  
 if he lies, he does not speak truly,  
 ∴ if he speaks truly and he lies, he does not speak truly,

And yet

Even if he speaks truly and he lies, he speaks truly.

Very awkward again! This is one of the earliest known formulation of the Liar’s paradox in the Middle Ages. Note that here the proposition “Socrates speaks truly and he lies” is supposed to be false, a proposition from which nothing follows, according to the Meludinenses.

As for the Parvipontani, they argue that Abelard’s argument at (A1) does not establish anything interesting, because according to their thesis:

Anything follows from the impossible.

Hence, there is nothing surprising about the fact that any conclusion whatsoever follows from propositions such as “Socrates is *man* and *stone*,” which are obviously impossible. They attempt to prove their thesis using the following argument, among others:<sup>76</sup>

- If (Socrates is *man*) and (Socrates is not *man*), Socrates is *man*.
- But if Socrates is *man*, Socrates is *man* or *stone*.
- ∴ If (Socrates is *man*) and (Socrates is not *man*), Socrates is *man* or *stone*.
- But if (Socrates is *man*) and (Socrates is not *man*), Socrates is not *man*.
- ∴ If (Socrates is *man*) and (Socrates is not *man*), Socrates is *stone*.

Using a similar line of reasoning, one can deduce that Socrates is *ass*, *goat*, *rose*, or anything whatsoever. Thus, the Parvipontani argue, anything follows from an impossible proposition such as “Socrates is *man* and Socrates is not *man*.”

Like the Meludinenses, the Parvipontani formulate a version of the Liar’s paradox, though they do so in a much more sophisticated manner:

- If Socrates only says that he himself lies, he says something true or false.
- But if (Socrates only says that he himself lies) and (he says something true), it is true that he himself lies.
- If it is true that he himself lies, then he says something false;
- ∴ If (Socrates only says that he himself lies) and (he says something true), then he says something false.
- Again, if (Socrates only says that he himself lies) and (he says something false), then it is false that he says something false;
- But if it is false that he says something false, he does not say anything false.
- ∴ If Socrates only says that he himself lies, he says something false and he does not say anything false.<sup>77</sup>

According to the Parvipontani, everything follows from this last contradictory consequent.

It is fair to say, therefore, every twelfth-century school of logic develops its own views about inferences in the course of reflecting on Abelard’s argument at (AI). Although these schools discuss the views of one another,<sup>78</sup> they do so without ever coming to any agreement among themselves. As it turns out, moreover, among the various theses proposed by these schools, only Parvipontani’s thesis was to survive and to continue to be discussed in the next century on.<sup>79</sup>



## NOTES

1. Many of the texts cited in this chapter are unedited or untranslated. I quote Latin texts only when the relevant passages have never been published; otherwise I give references to editions and other studies where the Latin text at issue is quoted, allowing readers to find these sources for themselves.
2. Barrow, Burnett, and Luscombe 1984–1985.
3. For the sources mentioning these schools, see Iwakuma and Ebbesen 1992.
4. In the case of the Porretani, we have the *Compendium logicae Porretanum*; in the case of the Meludinenses, we have the *Ars Meliduna* and the *Secta Meliduna*; and in the case of the Albricani, we have a short treatise *De sententia magistri nostri Alberici*. As for the Parvipontani and the Nominales, we have unfortunately no such texts, though a fragment of MS Avranches 224 f. 3r–v, a partial edition of which can be found in Iwakuma 1993b, might well be part of the Parvipontani's collection.
5. For example, the *Ars Burana* (193.10–11) adopts the Parvipontani's definition of *argumentum* (cf. §IV.1 below), while at the same time admitting the non-Parvipontanean view that oblique cases are nouns as well as nominatives (cf. §III.2 below).
6. Iwakuma 1987.
7. For vocalism, or early nominalism, see Iwakuma 1992b. Cf. also the discussion in chapter 1, §III.1.
8. For this Platonic stream, see Iwakuma 1996, §7. For the fully developed Platonic theories of Bernard of Chartres and the later Walter of Mortagne, see John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* II.17. (As far as I know, there are no logical texts which contain the fully developed Platonic theory.)
9. The realism of Anselm is discussed in more detail in Iwakuma 1996.
10. Hereafter I use “*man*” where English grammar requires “a man,” since the latter often has misleading connotations for discussions of the Latin, which lacks the indefinite article.
11. *LI Isag.*, *Glossae secundum vocales* (for its authorship, see Mews 1984), *LNPS*, another unpublished commentary P17, and the *Tractatus de generali et speciali statu*. Hereafter I shall follow the standard scholarly convention of referring to these commentaries by the numbers attached to them in Marenbon 2000, for example, P1, P2, etc.
12. This terminology can be traced back to Ps.-Rabanus (P3). I tentatively identify Ps.-Rabanus (P3) with William of Champeaux in Iwakuma 1999.
13. Tweedale 1976, 95–111, gives a more precise analysis to the counter-argument based on the texts of Abelard's *LI* and *LNPS*. The other texts

- mentioned in n. 12 above gives essentially the same counter-arguments against the material essence theory.
14. Iwakuma 1999 argues that P7 is a work of Abelard.
  15. *LI Isag.* 10.17–11.9, Spade 1994, 23–27 (introduction of material essence theory); and 11.10–13.17, Spade 1994, 28–40 (counter-arguments). Geyer 1919 reads, 10.31–32, “quam – trahunt”; but MS reads “quae – transit.”
  16. *LI Isag.* 13.18–14.6, Spade 1994, 41–44 (indifference theory); 14.7–17, Spade 1994, 45–56 (*collectio* theory); and 14.18–31, Spade 1994, 47 (*status* theory). Strictly speaking, it is incorrect to refer to this theory as the *status* theory, since the key-term *status* is not used in this text. The text does, however, report the characteristic thesis of the *status* theory, namely, that there are as many universals (species and genus) as there are individuals.
  17. MS Paris BN lat. 3237, ff. 125ra–130rb and ff. 123ra–124va. The discussion of universals are in ff. 125va–126ra = ff. 123rb–124rb.
  18. This part of the discussion has been neglected, to my knowledge, by all commentators except Tweedale. See the brief discussion in Tweedale 1976, 128–129.
  19. Dijs 1990, §§2–3 (material essence theory), §§4–7 (another theory), and counter-arguments for both §§8–25. This treatise does not mention vocalism either.
  20. For the various attempts that have been made so far to identify master R., see Dijs 1990, 91, n. 21. I tentatively propose that we identify him with Radulph, who was master at Laon by 1115 and successor of his brother Anselm’s school at his death c. 1117 (cf. Lesne 1940, 308). He would seem to be the best candidate to try to revive the once defeated theory of his former co-disciple, William of Champeaux.
  21. P17, Paris BN lat. 3237, f. 125va = f. 123rb: “Quorundam enim eorum est sententia eandem rem universalem totam indivisam in diversis et oppositis individuis esse, ut vere dici possit idem animal in essentia est materia Socratis et Brunelli. Ponunt etiam et genus et quodlibet universale in simplici natura acceptum rei singulari oppositum esse, inferioribus vero formis vestitum idem esse cum singulari.”
  22. See the texts by the Nominales ed. in Iwakuma 1995, 68–88.
  23. For Gilbert’s theory of universals, as developed in his theological works, see Nielsen 1982, 68. As for the Porretani’s theory of universals, see Martin 1983, xxxvii–xcii.
  24. See de Rijk 1967, 1.295.
  25. See *ibid.* 1967, 1.306.
  26. De Rijk 1966, 24 shows that P21 (a treatise on universals in MS Wien Österreichische Staatsbibl., VPL 2486, ff. 1r–4r, ed. by Grabmann 1947) is an extract from unedited P20 (in the same MS, ff. 45r–60v).

27. For example, see Grabmann 1947, 69, checked against the mss (the words in [] are omitted in P20): "Et notandum quod . . . cum dicimus 'homo est [animal]', genus praedicatur [de specie, quia dicitur] homo esse [P21] est P20 de illa *maneria rerum* (*om. Grabmann*) quae est animal, quia ostenditur quod *res* huius *maneriei* est illius."
28. de Rijk 1966, 29–30, and following him Marenbon 1993, 107, suggest that P21 and/or P20 is a product of the school of Alberic of Paris. But I doubt this attribution for various reasons, which I cannot discuss here. P25, a Porphyry-commentary undoubtedly by an Albricianus, simply gives a resume of Boethius's arguments concerning Porphyry's questions, and does not develop any theory of its own about universals.
29. de Rijk 1967, II.52.20–26.
30. Thomson 1988, II, vii 6. Cf. also I, xxxi 4 and II, vi 3.
31. The *maneria* theory is also held by William of Conches. See his *Glossae super Platonem*, 149 and *Glossae super Boethium*, 326.290–292. Adam of the Petit-Pont, the founder of the school of Parvipontani, never uses the term *maneria*. Did Parvipontani learn the *maneria* theory from William, not from Adam?
32. As for the *notio* theory, see William of Conches, *Glossae super Boethium*, lxx–lccxiv. I owe this information to the editor, L. Nauta.
33. The term *manerialiter* appears in William of Sherwood's *Introductiones in logicam*, 268.89. As for the *Nominales*, see Iwakuma and Ebbesen 1992.
34. For this topic, see the detailed discussion in Iwakuma forthcoming, §5. The relevant texts are edited in Iwakuma 1993a. Cf. also the notes there (§2) to Vienna I 1.4 and Escorial I 2.2.
35. See Iwakuma 1992a, 47–54, where it is argued that Garlandus of Besançon, author of *Dialectica*, was active in the beginning of the twelfth century, and that he is not the Garlandus Compostista, author of the *Compotus* (hence "compostista"), active in the eleventh century (as de Rijk 1959, xlix, suggests).
36. Garlandus of Besançon, *Dialectica* (ed. in de Rijk 1959) 65.16 and 68.30. Garlandus elsewhere explicitly asserts that "chimaera" was significant before but is not now. Cf. de Rijk 1959, 70.33. Does this mean that Garlandus thought that chimaera existed really before?
37. For this topic, see Iwakuma 1992b, §1, 97–101, and the sources collected there.
38. For the full context, see Iwakuma and Ebbesen 1992, 98.
39. *Compendium logicae Porretanum*, 2–3. Note that adjectives were considered as a group of nouns in this period.
40. This MS was thought to have been lost in the Second World War. Constant Mews, however, informs me that it is fortunately preserved in Biblioteka Jagiellionska, Krakov.

41. F. 1va: "‘Recta’ additur (in descriptione nominis) ut excludantur obliqui, qui non sunt nomina sed casus nominum. Solus enim nominativus nomen est eo quod per eum fiat impositio nominis." The *Ars Emmerana* also says that nouns are only nominatives, although the "recta" do not need to be added in the definition of nouns (150.12–21, cf. also 151.17–21). I suggest that the *Ars Emmerana* is a work of a Parvipontanus (cf. also the next note).
42. F. 4va: "Dicimus ergo argumentum esse dictum conditionalis hypotheticae quae transformatur ab argumentatione." The *Ars Emmerana* also adopts this definition of *argumentum* (164.26–165.4). For this definition of arguments, see §IV.1 below.
43. For the text of the *Glosulae*, see de Rijk 1967, 1.228, n. 1.
44. See *LNPS* 527.24 for "appellare vel nominare"; and 527.35 and 528.15 for "per appellationem."
45. The *Introductiones Montanae minores* 36.16–32. The *Introductiones Montanae maiores* (MS Paris BN lat. 15141, ff. 59vb–60ra) holds still another theory.
46. See de Rijk 1967, 1.300–305. As for the date, see Hunt 1980, 112, n. 7.
47. Cf. de Rijk 1967, II.260–282.
48. This treatise is, on the whole, word-for-word the same as the *Tractatus Anagnini* III, though at certain points it is more detailed. The MS contains in ff. 27r–34v several texts which I consider to be products of the schools that Alberic of Paris left in Italy.
49. See Iwakuma forthcoming, 2.1. For the text, see the edition in Iwakuma 1993a, 45–114.
50. See Green-Pedersen 1974, 16ff., Fragment 1.
51. For relevant sources, see Iwakuma 1995, 57ff. The designations "B8" and "B9" refer to the list in Green-Pedersen 1984.
52. Green-Pedersen 1984, III-C, 163–221.
53. See Iwakuma 1995, 53–58.
54. Concerning this and other counter-arguments by the Meludinenses against the Nominales' thesis, see Iwakuma 1995, 55.
55. In Iwakuma 1995, 56ff., I attributed this theory to the Albricani only tentatively. Since then, however, I have discovered further evidence for my view in MS Wien Nationalbibl., VPL 2237, f. 31r, "De sententia magistri nostri Alberici", which says explicitly, among *positiones nostrae*, "Septima est quod *argumentum est dictum hypotheticae generaliter propositiae*, ut dictum huius hypotheticae 'si aliquid est homo, ipsum est animal.' Dictum huius naturalis est argumentum ad istas omnes argumentationes 'Socrates est homo, ergo est animal' 'Plato est homo, ergo est animal,' et sic de ceteris. Dictum vero illius est hoc: aliquid esse animal si ipsum est homo."

56. See *Compendium logicae Porretanum*, Thesis III.40, 56ff.
57. See Green-Pedersen 1974, 17 (Fragment 1) and 18 (Fragment 3).
58. See Iwakuma 1993b, notes on 53–55.
59. All S are M, all M are P, therefore all S are P.
60. Paris BN lat. 15141, f. 83ra: “Sed m(agister) P(etrus) hypotheticam huiusmodi quae constat ex categorica et hypothetica naturali in nullo modo concedit propterea quod in quibusdam terminis eam falsam esse contingit, ut si nullus flos est, tunc si rosa est flos, rosa non est . . . Sed quod ista fal/sa sit, apparet ex hoc quod ex vero nunquam sequitur falsum, cum prima sit vera et quae sequitur sit falsa. Et hic communibus M. P. hypotheticam aliquam ex categorica sequi vel e converso negabat. Ad quod m(agister) Al(bericus), quamvis in quibusdam terminis qui leviter huiusmodi propositiones falsae numerantur, tamen non omnes falsae sunt iudicandae . . . Dicendum est igitur quod huiusmodi hypotheticae verae sunt, non tamen in quibuslibet terminis propositae, sed in his tantum in quibus subiectum nunquam potest esse sine praedicato vel nunquam sine eo contingit, . . .”
61. Paris BN lat. 15141, f. 84rb. I cite this passage in Iwakuma 1995, 58–59. The passage omitted there runs: “Sed primo errorem quorundam putantium hypotheticam, quae constat ex categoricis duabus iunctis per ‘et’ consequenti, eam(?) non esse aliam a syllogismo secundum cuius formam et regulam constituta est, removeere liceat. Dicunt namque syllogismum istum ‘omnis homo est animal, sed omne risibile est homo, ergo omne risibile est animal’, esse istam ‘Si omnis homo est animal et omne risibile est homo, [ergo] omne risibile est animal’, putantes scilicet quod ponitur in assumptione esse positum pro conclusione. Sed in utroque errant. Propositio namque hypothetica composita ex duabus categoricis iunctis per ‘et’ consequenti (| et tertia *ms*), in multis vera inveniretur, in quibus ille syllogismus, qui sic secundum regulam constitutus est, falsus est, ut ‘si omnis homo est lapis <et omnis lapis est> insensatus, omnis homo est insensatus’, ista hypothetica vera est, et syllogismus |84va| falsus est, quia habet falsam propositionem. Et quod syllogismus dici debeat falsus propter hoc quod habet falsam partem, dicit Aristoteles plane in Elenchis. Iterum si verum huiusmodi syllogismum concedant, oportet eos concedere ratione simili quod vero syllogismo probatur quod ipsi sunt asini, quod est inconveniens. Unde manifestum quod nullo modo syllogismus est illa hypothetica quae est constituta secundum(?) se. Ista vero hypothetica semper vera est in omnibus terminis, et nunquam fallit si secundum regulam alicuius fiat syllogismi. Illa vero quae constat ex categorica et hypothetica naturalibus non deberet, ut superius demonstravi, proponi [in quibus] in quibuscumque terminis syllogismus proponitur, sed in illis in quibus praedicatum nullo modo

- relinquat subiectum. Revertendum est igitur ad id quod demonstrare proposuimus, scilicet quod *loci* singulos 'syllogismos' contineat."
62. *Compendium logicae Porretanum*, 28, II-36.
  63. See *Ars Meliduna*, II.17 (de Rijk 1967, 1.347).
  64. For the discussion of syllogisms in the *Ars Meliduna*, see de Rijk 1967, II.378–383.
  65. For a survey of this issue, see Green-Pedersen 1984, III-C-2, esp. 198–201.
  66. For a survey of the number of *loci* discussed in the twelfth century, see Green-Pedersen 1984, III-C-3, 203–210. Green-Pedersen leaves open the question of this tradition's origin, but it appears to me to have begun with William. As for William's *loci*, see Iwakuma 1993b, note on 53.
  67. There are already a number of studies treating this discussion of Abelard's and the reactions of his rivals. See the list in Iwakuma 1995, 48, n. 5. Among these Martin 1987b is the most perspicuous, and therefore my discussion mainly follows his.
  68. Abelard's discussion of this issue in the *Dialectica* (395.6–397.13) is corrupted, as well as too brief to be certain of his views. I follow, therefore, the discussion reported in the *Introductiones Montanae minores*, 63.18–64.27 with emendations in Martin 1987a, 391, n. 29.
  69. *Introductiones Montanae maiores*, MS Paris BN lat. 15141, f. 63rb: "Fit autem illa obiectio. 'Socrates est homo et est asinus.' Haec propositio est hypothetica, ergo est simplex vel composita. Et nolumus in huius laborare solutione, cum hanc et consimiles propositiones minime esse concedamus. Nunquam enim qui dicit hanc orationem 'Socrates est homo et asinus', unum significat, † Et ideo multiplex est iudicanda et una vera et altera falsa. *M.P.* vero huiusmodi propositiones iunctas per 'et' (|) et per *ms*) hypo(theticas) iudicat etiam usque ad denarium numerum iudicat unam hypotheticariam(!)."
  70. *Introductiones Montanae minores*, 64.28–65.12.
  71. *Introductiones Montanae minores*, 65.23–66.4, where "expositione" on line 25 should be read "ex positione." Cf. Martin 1987a, 394–395.
  72. *Compendium logicae Porretanum*, 23: "Dicit enim magister (whom I interpret as Gilbert): non est necessitas consequentiae ubi est conflictus positionis et nature."
  73. *Compendium logicae Porretanum*, Thesis II.26 (22–23).
  74. *Compendium logiae Porretanum* (23.77–81), where I emend "hoc est 'Plato non est Socrates; . . .'" to "'si Socrates est Plato, non est Socrates; . . .'"
  75. For the Meludinenses' thesis (as well as the Parvipontani's thesis discussed below), see Iwakuma 1993a and relevant sources edited there.
  76. I follow the arguments given by Alexander Nequam, *De naturis rerum*, cited in de Rijk 1967, II.290ff.

77. I follow the version of Alexander Nequam, *De naturis rerum*, cited in de Rijk 1967, II.290, with some modification.
78. The *Ars Meliduna* mentions all the theses of the schools. As for the discussion between the Meludinenses and the Parvipontani, there are a number of sources to draw on (see Iwakuma 1993a). That Alberic of Paris knew well the theses of other schools is proved by the source, *De sententia magistri nostri Alberici* (MS Wien Nationalbibl. 2237, f. 31r) which mentions as *positio secunda, ex falso aliquid sequitur* (against the Meludinenses' thesis), as *tertia, ex impossibili aliquid sequitur* (against the Parvipontani's thesis), and as *quarta, negativa sequitur ex affirmativa* (against the *Nominales'* thesis).
79. See Spruyt 1993, D'Ors 1993, and Ashworth 1974, 133–136.

## ABELARD'S WRITINGS

This list is indebted to Marenbon 1997a, xiv–xvii.

The texts around which we have organized this volume represent only part of Abelard's larger corpus. For the sake of completeness, we list here alphabetically all of Abelard's known surviving works, including direct reports of his teaching. For each item, we include the Latin title, followed by an English translation or description of that title, and (wherever appropriate) the abbreviation used for it in this volume. We also list the standard – in some cases the only – available Latin editions and English translations of Abelard's works, together with any other editions referred to by our contributors.

- ad Ast.*                    *Carmen ad Astralabium* (= *A Poem for Astralabe*). Ed. in Rubingh-Bosscher 1987.
- Apol.*                      *Apologia contra Bernardum* (= *Defense against Bernhard*). Ed. in Buytaert 1969, vol. XI, 359–368.
- Coll.*                      *Collationes* (= *Comparisons*) or *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum, et Christianum* (= *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*). Ed. and trans. in Orlandi and Marenbon 2001. Cf. also the trans. in Spade 1995.
- Comm. cant.*            *Commentarius cantabrigiensis in Epistolas Pauli* (= *A commentary on the Epistles of Paul by an anonymous pupil of Abelard, with material reported from Abelard's lectures*). Ed. in Landgraf 1937–1945.
- Comm. Rom.*            *Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (= *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*). Ed. in Buytaert 1969, vol. XI, 39–340.



- Conf. fid. Hel.* *Confessio fidei ad Heloisam* (= *The Confession of Faith [Written] for Heloise*). Ed. in Burnett 1986a.
- Conf. fid.* *Confessio fidei "Universis"* (= *The Confession of Faith [that begins with the words] "For the universal"*). Ed. in Burnett 1986b.
- Dial.* *Dialectica* (= *Dialectic*). Ed. in de Rijk 1970.
- Ep. 2–14 etc.* *Epistolae* (= *Letters*). Letters 2–5 ed. in Muckle 1953; letters 6–7 ed. in Muckle 1955; letter 8 ed. in McLaughlin 1956; letters 9–14 ed. in Smits 1983. For letter 1, see *Historia calamitatum* (HC) below. The letter to Abelard's *socii* (unnumbered) is ed. in Klibanski 1961, 6–7.
- Ex. Or. Dom.* *Expositio Orationis Dominicae* (= *A Commentary on the Lord's Prayer*). Ed. in Burnett 1985.
- Ex. Sym. Ap./* *Expositio Symboli Apostolorum* (= *A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*) and *Sym. Ath.* *Expositio Symboli Sancti Athanasii* (= *A Commentary on the Athanasian Creed*). Ed. in Migne 1878, vol. 178.
- HC* *Historia calamitatum* (= *The Story of My Misfortunes*) or *Epistola 1* (= *Letter 1*). Ed. in Monfrin 1974, 62–109. Trans. in Radice 1974.
- Hex.* *Expositio in Hexameron* (= *A Commentary on Genesis 1:1–2:25*). Ed. in Romig 1981.
- Hymn. Par.* *Hymnarius Paraclitensis* (= *The Paraclete Hymnary*). Ed. in Waddell 1987. Cf. also the ed. in Szövérfy 1975.
- IP* A set of literal glosses traditionally identified as the *Introductiones parvulorum* (= *An Introduction [to Dialectic] for the Young*). Ed. in Dal Pra 1969. (For the source of the traditional identification, as well as doubts about its accuracy, cf. Mews 1985, n. 9 and Iwakuma forthcoming, n. 10.)
- IP Cat.* Literal gloss on Aristotle's *Categories*. Ed. in Dal Pra 1969, 43–68.
- IP De div.* Literal gloss on Boethius's *De divisione*. Ed. in Dal Pra 1969, 155–203.

- IP De in.* Literal gloss on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Ed. in Dal Pra 1969, 69–154.
- IP Isag.* Literal gloss on Porphyry's *Isagoge*. Ed. in Dal Pra 1969, 3–42.
- LI* *Logica “ingredientibus”* (= *The Logic [that begins with the words] “For beginners”*) which contains the following commentaries or glosses:
- LI Cat.* *Glossae super Categorias* (= The commentary from *LI* on Aristotle's *Categories*). Ed. in Geyer 1921, 111–305.
- LI De in.* *Glossae super Periermeneias* (= The commentary from the *LI* on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*). Ed. in Jacobi and Strub forthcoming, Geyer 1927, and Minio-Paluello 1956. Primary references are to the forthcoming Jacobi–Strub edition, but references to the Geyer and Minio-Paluello editions (prefixed by a “G” and “MP” respectively) are also included throughout. For translations of selections on mind and language (based on Geyer's edition 307.1–309.35; 312.33–318.35; 325.12–331.11; 365.13–370.22), see King 1982: vol. II, 92\*–116\*.
- LI Isag.* *Glossae super Porphyrium* (= The commentary from the *LI* on Porphyry's *Isagoge*). Ed. in Geyer 1919, 1–109. Selection on universals (7.25–32.12) trans. in Spade 1994.
- LI Top.* *Glossae super De topicis differentiis* (= The commentary from the *LI* on Boethius's *De topicis differentiis*). Ed. in Dal Pra 1969, 205–330.
- LNPS* *Logica “nostrorum petitori sociorum”* (= *The Logic [that begins with the words] “At the request of our friends”*) or *Glosulae* (= *The Little Glosses [on Porphyry's Isagoge]*). Ed. in Geyer 1933, 505–588. Selections on genera (512.6–533.9) and differentia (558.1–560.15) trans. in King 1982, vol. II, 29\*–54\*.

- Planctus*            *Lamentations*. 1, 4, and 6 ed. in Dronke 1986, 146, 119–123, 203–209; 3 ed. in Steinen 1967, 142–144; 2 and 5 ed. in Meyer 1905, 347–352, 366–374.
- Problemata*        *Problemata Heloisae cum Petri Abaelardi Solutionibus* (= *Questions of Heloise with the Replies of Peter Abelard*). Ed. in Migne 1878, vol. 178.
- Sc.*                    *Scito te ipsum* (= *Know Yourself*) or *Ethica* (= *Ethics*). Ed. and trans. in Luscombe 1971. Cf. also the ed. in Ilgner 2001, and the trans. in Spade 1995.
- Secundum mag. Petrum*        *Secundum magistrum Petrum sententie* (= *A Note [or Teaching] by Master Peter*). Ed. in Minio-Paluello 1956, vol. 11, 109–121.
- Sententie*            *Reports of Abelard's Teachings*, which include the following:
- Sent. Flor.*        *Sententie Florianenses* (= *The Teachings [Contained in the Manuscript] From Fleury*). Ed. in Ostlender 1929.
- Sent. Herm.*      *Sententie Abaelardi* (= *The Teachings of Abelard*), also known as *Sententie Hermanni* (= *The Hermanni Teachings* or *The Teachings of [or Written Down By] Hermannus*). Ed. in Buzzetti 1983.
- Sent. magistri Petri*    *Sententie magistri Petri* (= *The Teachings of Master Peter*). Ed. in Mews 1986.
- Sent. Par.*         *Sententie Parisienses* (= *The Parisian Teachings* or *The Teachings Contained in the Parisian Manuscript*). Ed. in Landgraf 1934.
- Serm. 1–33 etc.*    *Sermones* (= *Sermons*). 1–33 ed. in Migne 1878: vol. 178; cf. also Marenbon 1997a, 78, n. 80 for supplementary material, including two other sermons possibly written by Abelard.
- Sic et non*          *Yes and No*. Ed. in Boyer and McKeon 1977; q. 117 ed. in Barrow 1984. Trans. of prologue in Minnis and Scott 1988, 87–100.
- Soliloquium*        *Soliloquy*. Ed. in Burnett 1984.

<i>Theologia</i>	<i>Theology</i> , which occurs in three main versions:
TC	<i>Theologia Christiana</i> (= <i>Christian Theology</i> ). Ed. in Buytaert 1969, vol. XII, 69–372. Paraphrase in McCallum 1948.
TSB	<i>Theologia “summi boni”</i> (= <i>The Theology [that begins with the words] “The Highest Good”</i> ). Ed. in Buytaert and Mews 1987, 309–549.
tsch	Early drafts of <i>Theologiae “scholarium”</i> (see next item). Ed. in Buytaert 1969, vol. XII, 399–451.
TSch	<i>Theologia “scholarium”</i> (= <i>The Theology [that begins with the words] “Among the schools”</i> ). Ed. in Buytaert and Mews 1987, 309–549.
TI	<i>Tractatus de intellectibus</i> (= <i>A Treatise on Understandings</i> ). Ed. in Morin 1994. Trans. in King 1982, vol. II, 64*–91*.

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