

Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris

Theologians and the University c. 1100–1330

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1 The twelfth-century schools of northern France

The masters of the twelfth-century schools in northern France lived, taught and wrote as if they were always on to something new. Many younger scholars were certain that they had access to truths that had been beyond their predecessors, whom they did not hesitate to insult and to try to supplant. Those who reacted with horror to the schools accepted that their endeavours had novel qualities, and indeed this was a large part of what they disliked. It is important, however, to step back from twelfth-century polemic and to note the debt that the masters owed to the past. The work of medieval scholars depended on analysis of ancient Greek and Roman texts, of the Bible, and of early Christian writers. Owing to common interests and the means by which the schoolmen came into possession of classical works, the more recent works of Muslim and Jewish thinkers were also highly influential. But this body of material did not exist in its entirety at the beginning of the twelfth century. On the contrary, by a complex process of transmission and translation, more and more of the work of the ancient world became available during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Paradoxically, therefore, to study the oldest texts was in a sense to study the newest material. The continual supply of new material had an important effect: it meant that existing scholarship was always going out of date. A student did not have to consider himself a genius to feel that his work was bound to make a worthwhile contribution and indeed surpass that of his teachers. Furthermore, much scholarly effort was directed towards the process of interpreting texts, so that even texts that had long been available could be subjected to new techniques and again a degree of originality was easily attained. It is hard to imagine a greater incentive to intellectual endeavour.

Schools were certainly not, however, a completely new invention of the twelfth century. Monastic schools had existed across western Europe for centuries, and they were chiefly responsible for the survival of those authoritative texts which were available at the start of our period. Cathedral schools had also flourished in many parts of western

Europe in the eleventh century and they did much to provide the framework within which twelfth-century masters operated. It is extremely difficult, however, to establish the relationship between eleventh- and twelfth-century cathedral schools because so little scholarly work by eleventh-century masters survives. It has been convincingly argued that the eleventh-century masters simply did not write a great deal, or attached little importance to what they wrote, because their aim was the ethical formation of men who would go on to serve in ecclesiastical and secular government, and their teaching technique was to offer themselves as living models.¹ These concerns were not entirely lost, but the twelfth-century schools of northern France clearly represented a significant departure from the prevailing pattern in western Europe, with much greater emphasis on texts.² Paris was by no means the only place in which schools took on a new character, and the schools of Chartres, Laon, Rheims and Orléans, for example, were just as eminent. The first part of this chapter will identify the characteristics that set a number of northern French schools apart from previous contexts of learning. It will then consider what drew young men to study there, and explore the diverse ways of thinking that were practised. This diversity caused great debate and controversy, and this too must be examined. Finally, we must consider developments that took place in the second half of the twelfth century and that, with hindsight, can be seen to take us towards the formation of a university in Paris.

Competition, student power and the emergence of a new career

We are fortunate in that twelfth-century scholars were strongly inclined to reflect on themselves and their world, with the result that a number of accounts of the twelfth-century schools survive. Peter Abelard, for example, left a vivid and telling description in his autobiographical letter, the *Historia Calamitatum*, or 'History of my Misfortunes'. Peter Abelard was probably the most famous and controversial scholar of the first half of the twelfth century. He was born in 1079, the son of a Breton knight. He came to study in Paris in about 1100 and subsequently studied and

¹ C. S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia, 1994).

² On the shift from the oral to the textual, see C. J. Mews, 'Orality, literacy, and authority in the twelfth-century schools', *Exemplaria* 2 (1990): 475–500; L. Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 5–12, 37; B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983).

taught in various places in northern France, frequently benefiting from the political patronage of Stephen of Garlande, an archdeacon of Paris and a powerful figure at the French royal court. Several aspects of his intellectual achievements will be discussed later, but he was equally well known for his affair with Heloise. When established as the master of the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, he was employed as private tutor to Heloise, the niece of Fulbert, one of the canons of Notre Dame. The affair between Heloise and Abelard has long been the stuff of legend, their story subject to reinvention in every age. Until recently, Heloise was thought to be about seventeen when the relationship began, with Abelard in his late thirties. Now she is more commonly placed in her twenties, at least in her early twenties and perhaps even her late twenties, and she is presented as Abelard's intellectual equal with distinctive views that influenced Abelard's work. However we imagine their affair, it resulted in the birth of a son and secret marriage. When Abelard lodged her in a nunnery, Fulbert supposed that he was repudiating her, and had his men attack Abelard as he slept at night and castrate him. Heloise obeyed Abelard's command to enter a convent, and he too entered religion at the abbey of Saint Denis. Abelard was condemned for heresy at the Council of Soissons in 1121 and became abbot of Saint Gildas in Brittany about 1126. He was once more condemned for heresy at the Council of Sens in 1140 and died, a monk of Cluny, in 1142.³ The letters of Abelard and Heloise were written in the early to mid 1130s. The first letter in the collection was written by Abelard to an unnamed and probably imaginary friend to offer consolation. In this it conforms to a set rhetorical model, the *epistola consolatoria*, and the gist is that the friend's troubles are nothing compared to Abelard's. The letter tells of Abelard's early career as student and master, his affair with Heloise, their entry to religion, his trial at Soissons, and his subsequent career as monk and teacher.⁴

³ For the life of Abelard, see R.-H. Bautier, 'Paris au temps Abélard', in J. Jolivet (ed.), *Abélard en sons temps. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'occasion du 9e centenaire de la naissance de Pierre Abélard (14–19 mai 1979)* (Paris, 1981), pp. 21–77; M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford, 1997); J. Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 7–35; C. J. Mews, *Peter Abelard* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 1–20. For reassessment of Heloise's age and her influence on Abelard, see Clanchy, *Abelard*, pp. 173–4, 275, 330; C. J. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (New York, 1999), p. 32.

⁴ On the nature of the letters of Abelard and Heloise, see Clanchy, *Abelard*, pp. 15–16, 122–5, 154–5, 327–9; D. E. Luscombe, 'From Paris to the Paraclete. The correspondence of Abelard and Heloise', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 74 (1988): 247–83; Marenbon, *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 82–93; Mews, *Peter Abelard*, pp. 20–6; Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*; B. Newman, 'Authority, authenticity and

Having described the care which his father took to see that he was instructed in letters before he received a knightly training, Abelard explained his decision to adopt a different path:

For my part, the more rapid and easy my progress in my studies, the more eagerly I applied myself, until I was so carried away by my love of learning that I renounced the glory of a military life, made over my inheritance and rights of the eldest son to my brothers, and withdrew from the court of Mars in order to be educated in the lap of Minerva. I preferred the weapons of dialectic to all the other teachings of philosophy, and armed with these I chose the conflicts of disputation instead of the trophies of war. I began to travel about in several provinces disputing, like a true peripatetic philosopher, wherever I had heard that there was keen interest in the art of dialectic.⁵

Abelard gave up his prospects as an oldest son and the life of a knight in order to study. It is clear that he took with him the knightly taste for combat, and the martial imagery conveys the extent to which scholarly competition was a substitute for battle. The passage also illustrates two other characteristics of twelfth-century learning: the use of classical pagan literature, in this case to describe a crucial point of transition, and the itinerant nature of scholarly life.

Eventually Abelard arrived in Paris to study under William of Champeaux. As he presented it, this was the start of a vicious fight during which Abelard's intellectual superiority brought him success, while William could only resort to acts of jealousy and spite. Apparently William initially welcomed his new student, but it did not last long:

he soon took a violent dislike to me because I set out to refute some of his arguments and frequently reasoned against him. On several occasions I proved myself his superior in debate.⁶

William's leading students also took exception to the newcomer's displays, and Abelard responded by setting up his own school at Melun. Crucially Abelard measured his triumph in terms of reputation:

Thus my school had its start and my reputation for dialectic began to spread, with the result that the fame of my old fellow-students and even that of the master himself gradually declined and came to an end.⁷

the repression of Heloise', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992): 121–57, reprinted in B. Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 46–75; R. W. Southern, 'The letters of Abelard and Heloise', in *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 86–104.

⁵ *Historia Calamitatum* in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. B. Radice, revised M. T. Clanchy (London, 2003), p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4. ⁷ *Ibid.*

Abelard therefore moved his school closer to Paris where he ‘could embarrass him [William] through more frequent encounters in disputation’.⁸

Illness forced Abelard to go back to Brittany, but he returned some years later to tackle William once more. William had joined the canons regular and founded the abbey of Saint Victor, just outside Paris, but Abelard’s tactics remained the same. His aim was to discredit William’s intellectual achievements and steal his students.

My own teaching gained so much prestige and authority from this that the strongest supporters of my master who had hitherto been the most violent among my attackers now flocked to join my school.⁹

Eventually William gave up and retired.

These battles suggest the ease with which it was possible to set up a school without institutional backing. To succeed, it was essential to establish a reputation because the students made up their own minds where to go. This did more than flatter the successful master: it brought him a living. As Abelard repeatedly made clear, ‘wealth and fame’ went together. In short, the early twelfth-century schools had little institutional structure, were highly competitive, and allowed the students a decisive say in the process by which masters rose and fell. For those brave enough to enter this arena, a new type of career was on offer.¹⁰

This view is confirmed by Rupert of Deutz’s account of his encounter with masters and students in the schools. Rupert was given as a child to the Benedictine house of Saint Lawrence, near Liège. He became abbot of Deutz, near Cologne, in 1120 and wrote his *Apologia* in 1125. His great protector and patron, Cuno, abbot of Siegburg, had asked him to write a treatise that tackled questions about which the various orders of monks disagreed. The result was a *Commentary on the Benedictine Rule* in four books, in the first of which, his *Apologia*, Rupert reviewed his scholarly life thus far. He examined four controversies in which he had been involved: whether or not God willed evil; the role of the Holy Spirit; the creation of angels; and the eucharist. In each case he presented his version of events and then interpreted what he saw as the key authoritative texts to establish the validity of his position.¹¹ The gist of

⁸ *Ibid.* ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ On the entrepreneurial spirit of twelfth-century masters, see J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. T. L. Fagan (Oxford, 1993), pp. 61–4.

¹¹ On the nature of the *Apologia* and the circumstances in which it was written, see J. H. Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 176–7, 313–14, 346–50. On the four theological controversies, see *ibid.*, pp. 95–220.

it was that he had been treated appallingly, which was especially galling because he had invariably been right.

He opened by quoting Ecclesiasticus 13.23: ‘When the poor man speaks they say, “Who is this fellow?” And should he stumble, they even push him down.’ This text came to mind, he explained, because it applied to him: ‘For I spoke, and because I spoke they said: “Who is this fellow?”’¹² He complained bitterly that he was seen in this light because he had been a monk since childhood, shut away in the cloister – ‘I did not travel across sea and land like those rich merchants in whose thoughts I am a poor man’ – and they presumed to think that the parable in Matthew 13.45–6 applied to them. He cited the passage: ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.’¹³ Rupert continued:

For they went long distances, and journeyed to celebrated masters. And after they found many pearls that seemed good, the pearls of poets and philosophers, they found one truly good and valuable pearl, the pearl of holy and divine scripture, which they bought for a great price in vigilance and anxiety, if only they could find it perfectly and keep it into eternity! I did not do this, but like simple Jacob with his mother Rebecca, I lived at home. Consequently I am a poor and contemptible man in their minds, and they say: ‘Who is this? For he writes and speaks, speaks and writes, a man who was not worthy even to set eyes on our masters and teachers.’¹⁴

In a final burst of self-pity, Rupert explained that he really had been poor, barely able to get hold of notebooks in which to write.¹⁵ Rupert, however, reckoned that he had the last laugh:

But I saw the wisdom of God, in a certain way I saw the word incarnate, Christ the son of God, all golden, his whole body as if made from the finest gold, and from it the living waters flowing forcefully into me, rushing everywhere out of his body through many holes.¹⁶

This was perhaps an allusion to the visionary and mystical experiences that he believed informed his interpretations of scripture, although he did not explicitly make this claim until two years later.¹⁷ Rupert sometimes sounded like the most self-confident of schoolmen, repeatedly

¹² Rupert of Deutz, *Apologia*, PL vol. 170, col. 480.

¹³ *Ibid.* In my translation I have supplied more of the biblical text for the sake of clarity.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* ¹⁵ *Ibid.* ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, pp. 346, 349–52. On Rupert’s visions, see B. McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism, The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism 2* (London, 1994), pp. 328–33.

asserting his independence as a scriptural exegete, even when he found himself in disagreement with the Fathers. As a result, he was sometimes subjected to much the same criticism as leading secular masters.¹⁸ Ultimately, however, his was a way of knowing that made sense in monastic context.¹⁹

So who were Rupert's oppressors, and what actually happened? Sometimes he fell out with schoolmen, sometimes with monks. The account of his first controversy is especially rich and revealing. Very briefly, Anselm of Laon had distinguished between an 'approving' will and a 'permitting' will in God, concluding that God willed evil in the sense that he permitted it. Rupert considered it outrageous to accuse God of willing evil in any sense at all, and he was therefore accused of denying the omnipotence of God.²⁰ In his *Apologia* he complained that 'great masters and celebrated teachers, brilliant lights of all Francia' advanced the view that God willed evil, and they not only failed to listen to his view on the matter but condemned it as stupid.²¹ What Rupert did not say was that in 1116 he was tried for heresy, for his views on both this matter and the eucharist. Although he was cleared, he found it necessary to take refuge in the monastery of Siegburg. He then wrote a whole work on the omnipotence of God, but still he found no favour.²²

The men whose views mattered most were Anselm of Laon and William of Champeaux, now bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne. In 1117 Rupert decided to take action: 'I went to Francia to engage in a great battle of disputation against those masters whose authority was set so much above and against me.'²³ He wondered at the sight he had presented, 'alone, sitting on a humble ass, a youngster, attended by just one boy', going to distant cities to attack men whom he knew to be brilliant and to enjoy dignity both of office and in teaching. He was met by a crowd of masters and students, 'like a substantial army', who had turned out to hear and conquer him.²⁴ Extraordinarily, however, immediately after Rupert entered Laon, Anselm died. Rupert therefore went on to Châlons-sur-Marne where he had a 'violent clash' with William,

¹⁸ Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, pp. 214, 342, 345–6.

¹⁹ J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. Misrahi (London, 1978), p. 272; Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, p. 352.

²⁰ For an account of this controversy, see Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, pp. 181–216, with the arguments in the *Apologia* at pp. 212–14.

²¹ Rupert of Deutz, *Apologia*, PL vol. 170, col. 482.

²² Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, pp. 200–11.

²³ Rupert of Deutz, *Apologia*, PL vol. 170, col. 482.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, cols. 482–3.

after which Rupert did not know ‘whether he survived a whole year’.²⁵ Actually all this took place in 1117 and William died in 1122, but the sense is clear: one opponent fell dead at the prospect of fighting Rupert, while the other was mortally wounded in active disputation. Rupert claimed that the view that God willed evil had always been opposed by ‘many religious and learned men’, but they had kept their silence while Anselm and William were alive. Now, however, they were free to air their criticisms, and this controversy was over, although he himself was much hated by those with whom he had contended, and their desire for revenge came into play in later struggles.²⁶ Rupert thus recalled a life that had apparently been profoundly scarred by his conflicts with masters and their students.

Another example can be found in the *Life of Saint Goswin*. It describes how many students had come to hear Peter Abelard teach publicly in the cloister of Sainte Geneviève where he was ‘the inventor and assertor of unheard-of novelties’.²⁷ Men of greater wisdom were deeply shocked and wanted to do something about it, so they looked for someone to take on Abelard in disputation. They had little difficulty in persuading the young Goswin to rise to the occasion, despite the objections of his master Jocelin that Abelard went in for mocking rather than disputation, and was more of a jester than a teacher.²⁸ Giving no thought to his own inexperience, or to the fact that Abelard was ‘an extremely warlike man, used to victory’, Goswin climbed Monte Sainte Geneviève like David taking on Goliath.²⁹ Goswin proceeded to interrupt Abelard in mid lecture, ignoring his instruction to be quiet. Apparently Abelard did not deign to reply, but his students said that they knew Goswin to be astute in disputation and learned, and insisted that it would not be improper to engage with him, whereas it would be extremely improper to go on refusing. Abelard therefore let Goswin have his say.³⁰ The *Life*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, col. 483. ²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini Aquicinctensis Abbatis’, ed. M.-J.-J. Brial, in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* 14 (1806): 442. As Brial’s edition consists of excerpts which are not always clearly distinguished from each other, references will also be given to the edition from which they were taken: *Beati Gosvini Vita celeberrimi Aquicinctensis monasterii abbatis septimi a duobus diversis eiusdem coenobii monachis separatim exarata, e veteribus ms.*, ed. R. Gibbons (Duaci, 1620), 1.4, p. 12.

²⁸ ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini’, pp. 442–3; *Beati Gosvini Vita*, 1.4, pp. 12–14. On Abelard’s skill ‘in the art of repartee’ causing fear amongst his contemporaries, see Mews, ‘Orality, literacy, and authority’, p. 484. For his use of jokes, see also M. T. Clanchy, ‘Abelard’s mockery of St Anselm’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 1–23.

²⁹ ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini’, p. 443. *Beati Gosvini Vita*, 1.4, p. 14. See also the account in Clanchy, *Abelard*, pp. 91–3.

³⁰ ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini’, p. 443. *Beati Gosvini Vita*, 1.4, pp. 15–16.

does not reveal what they argued about, but apparently Goswin gave a magisterial performance in the art of disputation, ‘assuming that and affirming this, and by his affirmations not now wholly contradicting that’, until in the end Abelard was forced to admit that his position was unreasonable.³¹

The result of Goswin’s victory was that ‘many flocked to him, placing themselves under his teaching’.³² He had defeated a renowned master, and his career was made. Goswin subsequently entered religion, becoming a leading monastic reformer. As claustral prior of the abbey of Saint Médard, he encountered Abelard once again when the latter was briefly placed in his hands after his trial at the Council of Soissons in 1121.³³ His *Life* offers yet another account of a student attacking a master and thereby establishing an academic career.

The persistence of these conditions through to the middle of the century is confirmed by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon*, or ‘Defence of Logic’. John was born between 1115 and 1120, and he went to France to pursue his studies in 1136. Later he served at the papal court before becoming secretary to successive archbishops of Canterbury, Theobald and Thomas Becket. John became bishop of Chartres in 1176 and died in 1180. The *Metalogicon* was presented to Thomas Becket in 1159, when he was still Henry II’s chancellor.³⁴

In the *Metalogicon*, John recalled with nostalgia the orderly world which had been challenged by the likes of Abelard. He wrote an idealised portrait of Bernard of Chartres, ‘the greatest font of literary learning in Gaul in recent times’,³⁵ who gave his pupils a measured and

³¹ ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini’, p. 443. *Beati Gosvini Vita*, 1.4, pp. 16–17. I have borrowed Clanchy’s particularly fine translation of this passage; Clanchy, *Abelard*, p. 92.

³² ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini’, p. 443. *Beati Gosvini Vita*, 1.5, p. 19.

³³ ‘Ex Vita B. Gosvini’, p. 445. *Beati Gosvini Vita*, 1.18, pp. 78–81. See also Clanchy, *Abelard*, p. 231.

³⁴ On John of Salisbury’s life and especially his account of his studies in the *Metalogicon*, see S. C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and their Critics, 1100–1215* (Stanford, 1985), pp. 133–4, 140–56; P. Godman, *The Silent Masters: Latin Literature and Its Censors in the High Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 150–4; K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, ‘John of Salisbury and education in twelfth century Paris from the account of his *Metalogicon*’, *History of Universities* 6 (1986–7): 1–45; D. D. McGarry, ‘Introduction’, in John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, trans. D. D. McGarry (Berkeley, 1955), pp. xvi–xix; R. L. Poole, ‘The masters of the schools of Paris and Chartres in John of Salisbury’s time’, *English Historical Review* 35 (1920): 321–42; P. Riché, ‘Jean de Salisbury et le monde scolaire du xii^e siècle’, in M. Wilks (ed.), *The World of John of Salisbury* (1984, repr. Oxford, 1994), pp. 39–61; O. Weijers, ‘The chronology of John of Salisbury’s studies in France (*Metalogicon*, II.10)’, in Wilks (ed.), *World of John of Salisbury*, pp. 109–16.

³⁵ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, p. 67.

thorough education in grammar. Some he would exhort, and others he would flog. All were required to memorize, recite and compose, while the master also fostered faith and morals. In this world a challenge to the master was unthinkable. But John had little experience of this world himself; Bernard had taught at the cathedral school of Chartres from 1114 to 1119, was chancellor there from 1119 until at least 1124, and died before 1130. By the time John reached France, men who taught like Bernard were being forced into retirement. Indeed John says that two of his grammar teachers, William of Conches and Richard l'Èvêque, 'were overwhelmed by the onslaught of the ignorant mob, and retired'.³⁶ Whatever warmth he professed for the old ways, John himself lived the life of the modern student. His first master was Peter Abelard, from whom he learned the basic principles of dialectic, 'drinking in, with consuming avidity ... every word that fell from his lips'.³⁷ Over the next twelve years (1136–48) John studied under a succession of at least a dozen masters.³⁸ Sometimes he had to switch when a master left, and sometimes he took advice, but chiefly he pursued his education as he himself saw fit. At various times John himself earned his living as a teacher.³⁹ But eventually John left the schools to pursue a career in ecclesiastical government which culminated in his appointment to the see of Chartres. This at least the twelfth-century schools had in common with their predecessors: education could lead to administrative careers and high office, and some men went to the schools for that very reason.

The lure of logic

Whatever the career opportunities that education opened up, however, Peter Abelard and John of Salisbury were passionate about their studies, and so were many others. What were they doing and on what terms were masters competing to attract students? It is difficult to identify the major intellectual trends in the schools because their work was extremely varied. Moreover, twelfth-century scholars themselves did not agree on the meanings of the terms that they used to describe and categorize their work, nor did these terms always relate to actual programmes of study. The basic vocabulary was supplied by the classical programme of the seven liberal arts, which were divided into two groups: the trivium, consisting of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric, and the quadrivium, made up of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71. ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95–9. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98–9.

music. These provided a frame of reference, but not necessarily a formal curriculum.

It will already be apparent that dialectic, or logic, as contemporaries were equally happy to call it, was a major attraction. Both Abelard and John of Salisbury had commenced their travels in pursuit of this kind of learning. The study of dialectic centred upon the logical works written by Aristotle in the fourth century BC and mostly translated by Boethius in the early sixth century. The body of material available at the start of the twelfth century, known as the ‘old logic’, was gradually supplemented by the remaining works, known as the ‘new logic’, until the full corpus was in circulation by the end of the 1150s. The ‘old logic’ consisted of the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* by Aristotle, and the *Isagoge*, an introduction to the *Categories* written by Porphyry in the third century. Various commentaries and independent works by Boethius were also influential. The ‘new logic’ was made up of Aristotle’s *Topics*, *De Sophisticis Elenchis*, *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*.

What did medieval scholars find in these works? Why would men like Abelard make sacrifices and take risks to engage with it? The *Categories* looked at the ways in which individual words could refer to the world. The first ‘category’ was substance, a term that was not to be understood in a physical or material sense. It could refer to an individual thing (Socrates) or to a type of thing (human being). Only this first category could exist on its own. All the others, termed ‘accidents’, had to be predicated (or said) of a substance, and they were: quantity, quality, relation, location, time, posture, state, activity and passivity. *On Interpretation* looked at different types of propositions that could be formed with words. The *Topics* surveyed different types of argument, while the *De Sophisticis Elenchis* catalogued fallacious arguments. The *Prior Analytics* and the *Posterior Analytics* expounded the syllogism.

A sense of what it meant to begin to study logic can be gained from Porphyry’s introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories*. Porphyry’s *Isagoge* explained the basic meaning and significance of five key terms: genus (the plural is ‘genera’), species, difference, property and accident. Porphyry acknowledged that these terms could have several meanings, but he focused on the meanings that were of concern to philosophers. One of his fundamental opening points was that they were all terms that could be predicated (or said) of many things and not just one thing: ‘For some predications are said of only one thing, as individual terms like “Socrates”, “this” man, and “this” object; but others are said of many things, such as genera, species, differences, properties and accidents that occur jointly in many and not uniquely in some

one thing.⁴⁰ These terms came into play when individual things were grouped within classes along with other individual things of the same kind. Thus the individual Socrates could be placed in the class 'man' with other individual men. The collective term 'man' could then be predicated of Socrates ('Socrates is a man') and of other particular men. Some classes, however, could be regarded as sub-classes of larger classes. Thus 'man' could be placed within the class 'animal', along with other sub-classes like 'horse'. The first collective term under which individual things might be grouped was the 'species'. A collective term embracing several species was the 'genus'. Genus could therefore be defined as 'that to which the species is subordinate'⁴¹ and 'that predicated essentially of many things which differ in species, as animal, for example'.⁴² Porphyry further explained the distinction between genus and species as follows:

Genera, therefore, differ from those terms which are predicated of only one thing because they are explained as being predicated of many things. They differ from species which are predicated of many things. Although species are predicated of many things, the many do not differ in species but in number. For example, man, as species, is predicated of Socrates and Plato, who do not differ from one another in species but in number; but animal, a genus, is predicated of man, ox, and horse, which differ from one another in species as well as in number.⁴³

Species could therefore be defined as 'what is ordered under the genus and what the genus is predicated of essentially'.⁴⁴

The matter was complicated, however, because a class containing sub-classes could itself be a sub-class of another class, which could be a sub-class of yet another class, and so on until an all-embracing class was reached. In this structure, the all-embracing class at the top would be just a genus, the lowest class containing only individual things and no other classes would be just a species, while all the other intermediate classes would be both genera and species, each one a genus in relation to its sub-classes and a species in relation to the class of which it was itself a sub-group:

In each category there are the highest classes, the lowest classes, and some which are between the highest and the lowest. There is a highest genus beyond which there can be no other superior genus; there is a lowest species after which there can be no subordinate species; and between the highest genus and the lowest species there are some classes which are genera and species at the

⁴⁰ Porphyry the Phoenician, *Isagoge*, trans. E. D. Warren (Toronto, 1975), pp. 30–1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29. ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5.

same time, since they are comprehended in relation to the highest genus and to the lowest species.⁴⁵

Such a structure has become known as ‘Porphyry’s tree’, and he elaborated a specific example with substance as the all-embracing genus at the top and individual men at the bottom:

Substance is itself a genus; under this is body; and under body animate body, under which is animal; under animal is rational animal, under which is man; under man are Socrates, Plato, and particular men. Of these substance is the highest genus, and it is a genus only, while man is the lowest species, and it is species only. Body is a species of substance but a genus of animate body. Animate body is a species of body but a genus of animal. Animal is a species of animate body, but a genus of rational animal. Rational animal is a species of animal, but a genus of man. Man is a species of rational animal, but it is not also a genus of particular men. It is a species only. Every species which is predicated immediately prior to individuals will be a species only, never a genus. Just as, then, substance is highest because there is nothing superior to itself and is the highest genus, so too man is a species after which there is no species nor anything able to be divided into species. Of individuals (Socrates, Plato, and ‘this white’ are individuals) there can only be a species, namely the last species and, as we said, the lowest species. The intermediate classes will be species of prior classes but genera of posterior classes.⁴⁶

The third term that Porphyry considered was difference. He discussed various kinds of difference but the most important was what he called specific difference. Specific differences were those ‘which make another essence’ rather than those which merely produced differences in quality.⁴⁷ Thus ‘the difference “rational” added to animal makes another essence, but the difference “moving” only makes something qualitatively different from resting, so that the one makes a difference-in-essence, the other only a difference-in-quality’.⁴⁸ Such essential differences were vital because they differentiated the various species within any one genus. The difference ‘rational’, for example, marked out ‘man’ as distinct from other species such as ‘horse’ within the genus ‘animal’: ‘Man and horse do not differ in genus, for we are mortal animals and also irrational; but rational, when added, distinguishes us from them.’⁴⁹ Porphyry further distinguished between separable and inseparable differences. Examples of separable differences were ‘moving, resting, being healthy, being ill’, while examples of inseparable differences were ‘being hook-nosed, snub-nosed, rational, or irrational’. Inseparable difference could exist either *per se* or accidentally. ‘Rational, mortal, and being

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 42–3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

capable of knowledge belong to man *per se*, but hook-nosed or snub-nosed belong accidentally and not *per se*.⁵⁰ Specific differences were inseparable differences existing *per se*, which is why they marked out essence. Such differences were especially valuable because they could be used to construct definitions of things. Definitions consisted of 'a genus and such differences'.⁵¹ Man was therefore defined as a rational animal, 'animal' being the genus, and 'rational' the specific difference distinguishing the species 'man' from other species of animal.

Porphyry spent less time on the last two terms, property and accident. A property was a characteristic shared by all members of a species, but which did not form part of its essence or definition even though no other species possessed that characteristic. An example was 'the capacity to laugh in man', 'For even if a man does not always laugh, still he is said to be capable of laughing, not because he is always laughing but because it is natural for him to laugh.'⁵² An accident was a characteristic that could be possessed by members of more than one species, and which could appear and disappear without fundamentally changing whatever temporarily possessed the characteristic: 'What comes into being and passes away apart from the destruction of the substratum is an accident.'⁵³ Accidents could be 'separable' or 'inseparable': 'Sleeping is a separable accident, while being black occurs inseparably in the crow and the Ethiopian.'⁵⁴ In the case of inseparable accidents, what mattered was the limited significance of the characteristic to the conception of whatever possessed it: 'It is possible ... to conceive of a white crow and of an Ethiopian who has lost his colour apart from the destruction of the substratum.'⁵⁵ Having explained each of the five terms, Porphyry completed his work by comparing each term with every other term, describing for each pair the common characteristics that they shared and the differences between them. This permitted him to repeat his previous points with different phrasing.

Why was Porphyry's *Isagoge* adopted as a key introductory text? A firm grasp of the five terms that he explained was essential to understanding Aristotle's *Categories* not only because Aristotle deployed the terms, but also because he claimed that his ten categories were the ten highest genera, the only genera which were just genera and not also species within a higher genus. To put it another way, there were only ten distinct Porphyrian trees, each headed by one of Aristotle's ten categories. As Peter Abelard explained in his glosses on Porphyry: 'Knowledge

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 48. ⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

of genus pertains to the categories because Aristotle there sets forth the ten supreme genera of all things, in which categories he comprehends the infinite meanings of the names of all things.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Porphyry's analysis began to address the issue of what constituted a sound argument because it could be used to identify valid and invalid statements:

The genus is always predicated of the species and all the higher of the lower, but the species is predicated neither of its own proximate genus nor of the higher ones. There is no convertibility of genus and species, for equals must be predicated of equals, as neighing of horse, or the greater of the lesser, as animal of man, but never the lesser of the greater. You may never say that animal is a man, as you may say man is an animal. Necessarily, too, the genus of the species and the genus of the genus up to the highest genus will be predicated of whatever things the species is predicated. If it is true to say that Socrates is a man, that man is an animal, and that animal is a substance, then it is also true to say that Socrates is an animal and a substance.

Since, therefore, the higher is always predicated of the lower, (1) the species will be predicated of the individual, (2) the genus both of the species and of the individual, and (3) the highest genus of the genus or genera (if there be very many subordinate intermediates), of the species, and of the individual. The highest genus is predicated of all the subordinate genera, species, and individuals; the genus prior to the lowest species of all the lowest species and individuals; the species alone of all the individuals; but the individual term of one only of the particulars.⁵⁷

Thus, if the individual Socrates belonged to the species man, and the species man was part of the genus animal, it followed that some statements would be valid and some invalid. It would be correct to say that 'Socrates is a man' (the species predicated of the individual), that 'man is an animal' (the genus predicated of the species), and that 'Socrates is an animal' (the genus predicated of the individual). But it would be false to say that 'animal is man' (the species predicated of the genus), 'animal is Socrates' (the individual predicated of the genus), or 'man is Socrates' (the individual predicated of the species). Rules for identifying valid and invalid statements were thus established. Put most simply, having set up one of Porphyry's trees, the higher could always be predicated of the lower, while the lower could never be predicated of the higher. To give just one further instance, Porphyry offered the general rule that 'the property is predicated convertibly with its species, while the genus is convertible with nothing'. This meant that it was legitimate

⁵⁶ 'The glosses of Peter Abailard on Porphyry', in R. McKeon (ed. and trans.), *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, 2 vols. (New York, 1929), vol. 1, pp. 208–58 at 215.

⁵⁷ Porphyry, *Isagoge*, pp. 40–1.

to state that ‘if there is man, there is the capacity to laugh’ and ‘if there is the capacity to laugh, there is man’; here the property was being predicated convertibly with its species. It was not, however, correct to state that ‘if there is animal, there is man’ or ‘if there is animal, there is the capacity to laugh’; these false assertions illustrated why the genus was convertibly with nothing.⁵⁸

The *Isagoge*’s relevance to the construction of arguments was readily apparent to men like Abelard:

If the parts of logic have first been distinguished carefully, it is seen at once what is the part through which the science of the present work leads to logic. On the authority of Cicero and Boethius there are two parts of which logic is composed, namely, the science of discovering arguments and of judging them, that is, of confirming and proving the arguments discovered. For two things are necessary to one who argues, first to find the arguments by which to argue, then if any should criticize the arguments as defective or as insufficiently firm to be able to confirm them. Wherefore Cicero says that discovery is by nature prior. The present science, however, is concerned with both parts of logic, but most of all with discovery. And it is a part of the science of discovering. For how can an argument be deduced from genus or species or the others, if the things which are here treated are not known? ... But since an argument is confirmed from the same considerations from which it is discovered, this science is not unrelated to judgment. For, as an argument is derived from the nature of genus and species, so, once derived, it is confirmed from the nature of genus and species. For considering the nature of species in man, so far as it is related to animal, I find at once from the nature of the species the argument for proving animal. But if any one should criticize the argument, I show that it is suitable immediately by indicating the nature of the species and the genus in both, so that from the same conditions of the terms the argument may be found and when it has been found it may be confirmed.⁵⁹

The most advanced work on argument focused on the syllogism, which was most fully treated in the new logic, especially Aristotle’s *Prior Analytics*.⁶⁰ Aristotle defined the syllogism as ‘discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵⁹ ‘The glosses of Peter Abailard on Porphyry’, pp. 211–12; see also p. 217.

⁶⁰ For basic introductions to syllogistic argument in Aristotle and medieval work, to which I am indebted in the following account, see H. Lagerlund, *Modal Syllogistics in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 3–18; J. Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350)* (London, 1987, repr. 1996), pp. 38–41; P. V. Spade, *Thought, Words and Things: An Introduction to Late Mediaeval Logic and Semantic Theory* (Version 1.1, 2002; www.pvspade.com/Logic/docs/thoughts1_1a.pdf). For more extended introductions, see A. Broadie, *Introduction to Medieval Logic*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993); I. M. Bochenski, *A History of Formal Logic*, trans. I. Thomas (Notre Dame, IN, 1961), pp. viii–xiii, 40–99, 148–251.

necessity from their being so'.⁶¹ It was made up of two premises and a conclusion. For example:

1. All people are mortal;
2. all Scots are people;
3. therefore all Scots are mortal.

The major premise (1 in the above example) contained the major term, which was the predicate in the conclusion ('mortal' in the above example). The minor premise (2) contained the minor term, which was the subject of the conclusion ('Scots'). The term shared by the two premises, and which did not occur in the conclusion, was the middle term ('people'). Aristotle explored the nature of syllogistic argument by classifying syllogisms in three ways, the third combining the first two.

First, Aristotle classified syllogisms by identifying four different types of proposition, which were later referred to by letters. 'All X are Y' was a universal affirmative, signified by the letter A. 'No X is Y' was a universal negative, labelled E. 'Some X is Y' was a particular affirmative, labelled I. 'Some X is not Y' was a particular negative, allotted the letter O. The letters were not randomly chosen. A and I, attached to the two types of affirmative proposition, were the first two vowels in 'affirmo', meaning 'I affirm', while E and O, given to the two types of negative proposition, were the vowels in 'nego', meaning 'I deny'. Using this system of classification, the example given above consisted of three universal affirmatives, AAA. Another syllogism would be:

1. No human being is perfect;
2. all historians are human beings;
3. therefore no historian is perfect.

Here the major premise is E (universal negative), the minor premise is A (universal affirmative), and the conclusion is E (universal negative): EAE.

Second, further classification was possible when account was taken of how the middle term was positioned in the two premises: in each premise the middle term could be either the subject or the predicate. Four combinations or 'figures' were therefore possible.

Figure 1: The middle term is the subject in the major premise
and the predicate in the minor premise.

⁶¹ Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, 1.1 in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York, 1941, repr. 2001), p. 66.

Figure 2: The middle term is the predicate in both the major and the minor premises.

Figure 3: The middle term is the subject in both the major and the minor premises.

Figure 4: The middle term is the predicate in the major premise and the subject in the minor premise.

In fact Aristotle only listed the first three figures, while considering instances of the fourth, and he was often followed by medieval scholars in this regard. Reverting to the first example above, where the middle term is 'people', we have:

1. All people (middle term) are mortal;
2. all Scots are people (middle term);
3. therefore all Scots are mortal.

In the major premise, the middle term is the subject. In the minor premise, the middle term is the predicate. So this is an example of the first figure. In the second example above, the middle term is 'human being':

1. No human being (middle term) is perfect;
2. all historians are human beings (middle term);
3. therefore no historian is perfect.

In the major premise, the middle term is again the subject. In the minor premise, the middle term is again the predicate. So this is another example of the first figure. Any syllogism could be placed in one of the figures in this way.

A third type of classification was generated by combining the first two, the four types of proposition and the four figures. In each of the four figures it was possible to envisage every possible combination of types of proposition within the syllogistic form, each combination being called a 'mood'. Thus in the first example above the major premise is a universal affirmative, the minor premise is a universal affirmative, and the conclusion is a universal affirmative, giving us AAA in the first figure. In the second example, however, the major premise is a universal negative, the minor premise is a universal affirmative, and the conclusion is a universal negative, giving us EAE in the first figure. All the possible combinations of types of proposition could be repeated in each of the four figures, which gave 256 moods in total. Not all moods, however, were deemed valid. Aristotle identified fourteen valid moods in his three figures, and he discussed a further five that can be placed in the fourth figure. In the middle ages each valid mood was given a

mnemonic name, and they can be listed within each figure along with the types of proposition to be found in the major premise, the minor premise and the conclusion in each case:

First figure

AAA	Barbara
EAE	Celarent
AII	Darii
EIO	Ferio

Second figure

AEE	Camestres
EAE	Cesare
EIO	Festino
AOO	Baroco

Third figure

AAI	Darapti
EAO	Felapton
IAI	Disamis
AII	Datisi
OAO	Bocardo
EIO	Ferison

Fourth figure

AAI	Bramantip
AEE	Camenes
IAI	Dimaris
EAO	Fesapo
EIO	Fresison

Embedded within these strange names were two sets of information. First, the vowels indicated the types of proposition taken by the major premise, the minor premise and then the conclusion in the mood to which the name had been applied. Thus *Barbara* was A (universal affirmative in the major premise), A (universal affirmative in the minor premise) and A (universal affirmative in the conclusion). *Celarent* was E (universal negative in the major premise), A (universal affirmative in the minor premise) and E (universal negative in the conclusion). The figure was not encoded in the names, so one just had to remember that *Barbara* and *Celarent* were in the first figure. The two examples used repeatedly above are AAA and EAE, and both in the first figure, so they are instances of the moods *Barbara* and *Celarent* respectively. The second set of information concerned the relationship between moods in the first figure and moods in the other figures. Aristotle deemed the syllogisms in the first figure to be obviously valid, whereas the syllogisms in the other figures required proof. They could be proved by being

restated as syllogisms in the first figure, a process termed 'reduction', and involving rules of conversion that Aristotle carefully set out. The letters other than the vowels in the mnemonic names indicated how this process was to be conducted. To give just one example, the first letter of the name was the same as the first letter of the mood in the first figure to which the syllogism was to be reduced. Thus Darapti in the third figure should be reduced to Darii in the first figure. Other letters indicated the technical procedures that were to be followed, leaving only a few that simply made up the name.⁶² This is just to scratch the surface, but the syllogism became a basic technique of the schools and subsequently of the universities. This form of argument was used in most of the writings produced in these contexts. Because the premises and the conclusion are not usually identified and systematically laid out, the syllogistic form is often difficult for the modern reader to appreciate, but the medieval scholar could spot and classify a syllogism at a glance.

Logic, or dialectic, therefore enabled a scholar to understand the way in which language could be used to construct arguments, and above all to distinguish between valid arguments and fallacies. It offered an approach to truth which was both precise and systematic. To many it therefore represented a key to all other branches of knowledge. John of Salisbury declared that logic 'organizes and vivifies' other studies,⁶³ continuing:

while each study is fortified by its own particular principles, logic is their common servant, and supplies them all with its 'methods' or principles of expeditious reasoning. Hence logic is most valuable, not merely to provide exercise [for our faculties], but also as a tool in argumentative reasoning and the various branches of learning that pertain to philosophy.⁶⁴

But there were many others who found dialectic fascinating in itself, or did not so easily see the divisions between the branches of learning. This was not least because the authoritative texts in dialectic raised but did not settle further philosophical problems.

The question of universals was a case in point. The nature of the problem is easily grasped, even if the various possible solutions are not. I am sitting at a table, 'this table'. On the other side of the room there is another table, 'that table'. The collective term 'table' is applied both to 'this table' and to 'that table', and indeed to all other individual tables. Similarly the collective term 'chair' is applied to the particular chair on which I am sitting, 'this chair', and to every other individual chair. All

⁶² For full details, see Spade, *Thought, Words and Things*, p. 22

⁶³ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, p. 101.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

the particular tables and all the particular chairs could also be included under the collective term 'furniture'. All these collective terms, 'table', 'chair' and 'furniture', are universals. As already observed in Porphyry's *Isagoge*, the particular objects, such as 'this table', were termed 'individua', or 'individual things'. The first collective term under which individual things might be grouped, for example 'table', was called the 'species'. A collective term which embraced several species, for example 'furniture', was called a 'genus'. The problem is to understand the nature of universals. Do universals exist independently of individual things? The labels 'realist' and 'nominalist' are used to refer to the two basic directions which can be taken in answer to this question. The realist argues that in some way universals exist independently of individual things, that 'table', or one might say 'tableness', exists whether or not any particular tables exist, and that all individual tables reflect or partake of 'table' or 'tableness' in a manner to be determined. The nominalist maintains that universals are just words which we use to group individual things together, and that only the individual things truly exist.

The study of dialectic led twelfth-century scholars to tackle universals because the problem was raised in texts which formed part of the 'old logic'. Thus Porphyry, at the start of the *Isagoge*, framed the question explicitly while declining to offer a solution:

I shall put aside the investigation of certain profound questions concerning genera and species, since such an undertaking requires more detailed examination: (1) whether genera or species exist in themselves or reside in mere concepts alone; (2) whether, if they exist, they are corporeal or incorporeal; and (3) whether they exist apart or in sense objects and in dependence on them.⁶⁵

In the rest of the *Isagoge* it was indeed very unclear whether Porphyry was talking about words alone or about words and things.⁶⁶ Debate was further stimulated by Boethius' second commentary on the *Isagoge* in which he discussed the relevant views of both Plato and Aristotle.

The issue of universals was discussed in the eleventh century, but it was in the first half of the twelfth century that it became the subject of frequent and heated debate. John of Salisbury vividly described the plethora of theories which were advanced.⁶⁷ One of the earliest masters to become well known for his views on the matter was Roscelin of Compiègne. Roscelin lived from about 1050 to 1125, was a canon

⁶⁵ Porphyry, *Isagoge*, pp. 27–8. See also P. V. Spade (trans. and ed.), *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals* (Indianapolis, 1994), p. 1.

⁶⁶ See the comments of Marenbon, *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 105–8.

⁶⁷ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, pp. 112–41.

of Compiègne, taught at Loches and was Abelard's master.⁶⁸ Little of Roscelin's work survives, but according to his critics he took an extreme nominalist position, maintaining that universals were merely words or sounds. As John of Salisbury cuttingly put it:

One [man] holds that universals are merely word sounds, although this opinion, along with its author Roscelin, has already almost completely passed into oblivion.⁶⁹

An extreme realist position was maintained by William of Champeaux and, according to Abelard, it was this which finally gave Abelard the chance to destroy William's standing and reputation:

I returned to him to hear his lectures on rhetoric, and in the course of our philosophic disputes I produced a sequence of clear logical arguments to make him amend, or rather abandon, his previous attitude to universals. He had maintained that in the common existence of universals, the whole species was essentially the same in each of its individuals, and among these there was no essential difference, but only variety due to multiplicity of accidents. Now he modified his view in order to say that it was the same not in essence but through non-difference ... Consequently, when William had modified or rather been forced to give up his original position, his lectures fell into such contempt that he was scarcely accepted on any other points of dialectic, as if the whole subject rested solely on the question of universals.⁷⁰

If Abelard is representing William fairly, and William's own work on the matter does not survive, William argued first that every individual member of a species was essentially identical, in other words that the universal was equally present in each individual thing, and that differences between individual members of a species were merely accidental. Thus he would have accepted that the universal 'humanity' was entirely and identically present in all people, and differences were accidental. Abelard was able to point to the absurd consequences of this position. If two people had the same essence, they were the same person. If the two people were in two places, the same person was in two places at once. William then retreated to the position that the universal existed in each individual member of a species without difference. Whatever ideas lay behind this shift, Abelard seemed to imply that it was just a desperate, but fundamentally meaningless, change of words.⁷¹ Abelard's ideas about universals developed over time, and he wrote a great deal on the

⁶⁸ Clanchy, *Abelard*, pp. 75–6; M. Haren, *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Toronto, 1992), p. 91.

⁶⁹ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, p. 112.

⁷⁰ *Historia Calamitatum*, in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, p. 60.

⁷¹ On this episode, see Clanchy, *Abelard*, p. 83; F. C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (London, 1972), p. 81.

subject. He was clear, however, that universals were words. He did not mean words as sounds, but words as expressions that carried meaning. Universals were words that bore meanings that had been abstracted by the human mind, words which signified concepts.⁷²

It will by now be clear that the men who rushed to study logic were going to acquire the ability to construct arguments and distinguish between truth and falsehood. Whereas today we largely operate with an intuitive sense that an argument works or fails, the medieval schoolmen could say exactly why an argument worked or failed because they could break the argument down into its constituent parts and name every one. More than that, they acquired detailed knowledge of relatively short authoritative texts that raised huge philosophical questions and were dense in potential meaning, which is perhaps to say that their core texts were unclear on some of the most fundamental issues and therefore invited a range of different interpretations. Furthermore, all of this required the acquisition of a specialist vocabulary that was utterly mystifying to anyone who had not received the complex and highly technical training that the schools provided. The uninitiated could not hear or read their work and expect to get anywhere at all with it. When a man entered the schools he became an insider, with a powerful claim to knowledge and understanding that was denied to others.⁷³

While it is extremely difficult for us to follow the work of the schoolmen without their training, their sense of excitement and spirit of enquiry are much easier to appreciate. There was huge confidence in human capacity to understand and a belief in the value of asking questions to gain knowledge and insight. This is readily apparent from Abelard's reaction to Anselm of Laon, the master to whom he turned after William of Champeaux retired.

I therefore approached this old man, who owed his reputation more to long practice than to intelligence or memory. Anyone who knocked at his door to seek an answer to some question went away more uncertain than he came. Anselm could win the admiration of an audience, but he was useless when put

⁷² See Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 81–3; K. Jacobi, 'Philosophy of language', in J. E. Brower and K. Guilfooy (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 126–57 at 134–7; J. Marenbon, *Early Medieval Philosophy (480–1150)* (London, 1983), pp. 135–6; Marenbon, *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 174–201; Spade (trans. and ed.), *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*, pp. 29–33; M. M. Tweedale, *Abailard on Universals* (Amsterdam, 1976).

⁷³ R. M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003), p. 93 refers to logic as 'a private language' when discussing disputation as 'a bonding mechanism' that helped form masculinity in universities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See also *ibid.*, p. 91.

to the question. He had a remarkable command of words but their meaning was worthless and devoid of all sense.⁷⁴

By ‘memory’ Abelard did not mean what one could recall from the past; that was really what he condemned as ‘long practice’, or ‘usus’. ‘Memory’ meant what one could discover by looking inward, by thinking about thinking. This and ‘intelligence’, or ‘ingenium’, were the qualities which Abelard valued in himself and others. Moreover, in his view, they were qualities which should be applied not merely to dialectic and the liberal arts, but also to theology. Indeed it was specifically because he wanted to study theology that he sought out Anselm who was ‘then the greatest authority’ in this field.⁷⁵

Abelard’s confidence in his own intellectual abilities did not endear him to Anselm. When Abelard’s attendance at classes declined, Anselm’s leading students took offence and pointedly asked him what he thought about studying the Bible when all his previous training had been in philosophy. Abelard replied that he ‘found it most surprising that for educated men the writings or glosses of the Fathers themselves were not sufficient for interpreting their commentaries without further instruction’.⁷⁶ Challenged to interpret a commentary on an obscure prophecy of Ezekiel, Abelard not only accepted but brushed aside those who urged him to take time to prepare:

I replied indignantly that it was not my custom to benefit by practice, but I relied on my own intelligence.⁷⁷

According to the *Historia Calamitatum*, Abelard was so successful that he ended up giving a series of lectures, only for the jealous Anselm to ban him from teaching further.

But Abelard brought more than intellectual confidence to theology: he also used the methods of dialectic. Having become a monk, and having withdrawn from the abbey of Saint Denis to a priory in Champagne, he was able to develop his theological project in full:

Now it happened that I first applied myself to lecturing on the basis of our faith by analogy with human reason, and composed a theological treatise on divine unity and trinity for the use of my students who were asking for human and logical reasons on this subject, and demanded something intelligible rather than mere words. In fact they said that words were useless if the intelligence could not follow them, that nothing could be believed unless it was first understood.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Historia Calamitatum*, in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* ⁷⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Evidently the theological application of logic found an enthusiastic audience. Even more striking is the view that an understanding based on logic was necessary for belief.

Abelard's work on the Trinity was perhaps his most controversial. He began one treatise:

Christ the Lord, who is the wisdom of God incarnate, has diligently distinguished the perfection of the highest good, which is God, by describing it with three names ... He called the divine substance 'the Father', 'the Son' and 'the Holy Spirit' for three causes. He called it 'the Father' in accordance with that unique power of His majesty which is omnipotence, by which He can effect whatever He wills as nothing is able to resist Him. The same divine substance He said is 'the Son' in accordance with the distinction of His own wisdom, by which He can truly judge and discern all things so that nothing can lie hidden by which He is deceived. He likewise called that substance 'the Holy Spirit' in accordance with the grace of His goodness ... This therefore is how God is three persons, that is, 'the Father', 'the Son' and 'the Holy Spirit'. And so we say the divine substance is power, wisdom and goodness; indeed, it even is power itself, wisdom itself and goodness itself.⁷⁹

Abelard thus distinguished between substance and the different names that could be given to that substance. He further associated each person in the Trinity with a different quality, the Father with power, the Son with wisdom, and the Holy Spirit with goodness. This was theologically dangerous because it might seem that each person in the Trinity was just a name, or that, for example, Christ was not as powerful as the Father. The whole point of Abelard's strategy, however, was to open up approaches that would allow him to apply reason further. In another work he used the distinction between substance and names to work out an analogy to explain how the Trinity was both three and one. Abelard said that the divine substance was designated by three names, and this was like Marcus Tullius Cicero who had three names all designating the same substance:

Very rightly the Father is believed to be God and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but they are not considered as several gods, since these are three names designating the divine substance. So likewise Tullius is truly said to be a man and so is Cicero and Marcus also is called a man. Yet in no way are Marcus and Tullius and Cicero [different] men, since these are words designating the same substance. Indeed, several things differ from each other only in expression and not in substantial meaning.⁸⁰

Against this it could easily be objected that orthodox belief had the three names designating three persons, whereas the names of Cicero designated just one. Abelard was aware that the analogy was imperfect,

⁷⁹ Peter Abelard, *Theologia Summi Boni*, as quoted by Clanchy, *Abelard*, p. 270.

⁸⁰ Peter Abelard, *Dialectica*, as quoted by Clanchy, *Abelard*, p. 109.

but thought it worth making.⁸¹ Putting the emphasis on the qualities of power, wisdom and goodness allowed him to argue that these were the qualities that should be attributed to a perfect being on rational grounds, and then to try to show that Old Testament figures and ancient philosophers had known of the Trinity.⁸² Logic was very much the modern way to explore traditional problems, and to many it seemed to hold out limitless possibilities. Not only did it confer the power to argue, a way into philosophical debate, and a form of initiation into an intellectual elite, but it also seemed to promise new understanding of divine mysteries.

Texts: interpreting authorities

It is important, however, not to overstate the extent to which men like Abelard were rejecting past traditions. Crucially, Abelard did not mean to undermine the status of authoritative texts. At the Council of Soissons in 1121, Alberic, a former student of Anselm of Laon, queried a passage in Abelard's writings about the nature of God. When Abelard offered to explain, Alberic snapped: 'We take no account of rational explanation ... nor of your interpretation in such matters; we recognize only the words of authority.' But Abelard had cited an authority and could reply, 'Turn the page ... and you will find the authority.'⁸³

Indeed, far from rejecting authorities, Abelard was deeply concerned about methods of interpreting them. One of his most significant works regarding textual interpretation was the *Sic et Non*, meaning 'Yes and No', or 'For and Against'. Composed during the 1120s, this book contained 158 headings, each of which raised a theological issue. The issues ranged from the nature of God to matters of practical morality. Under each heading Abelard placed quotations from the Church Fathers. These quotations were selected because they offered contradictory views on the theological issue raised in the heading. No attempt was made to resolve any of the contradictions or to express a clear view on any of the 158 issues. This in itself made the point that authorities could not be used unless they were interpreted. But Abelard went further: the prologue to the *Sic et Non* outlined a method of interpretation which

⁸¹ See Clanchy, *Abelard*, p. 109.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 270–2; Marenbon, *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 55–7. For the important argument that concern with the Trinity led to significant developments in Abelard's study of logic, see J. E. Brower, 'Trinity', in Brower and Guilfooy (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, pp. 223–57; Marenbon, *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 155–8.

⁸³ *Historia Calamitatum*, in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, p. 21.

would make it possible to reconcile the contradictions and establish a coherent view supported by the authorities.

Abelard began the prologue by urging respect for authorities, despite the contradictions to be found between them:

Although, amid so great a mass of verbiage, some of the sayings even of the saints not only seem to differ from but also actually to contradict one another, we must not be so bold as to judge those by whom the world itself must be judged ... Let us not presume to denounce them as liars or despise them as mistaken ... Reflecting upon our own feebleness, let us suppose that we lack the gift of understanding rather than that they had no gift for writing.⁸⁴

After the relentless bragging of the *Historia Calamitatum*, these expressions of humility can come as a surprise. The rest of the prologue can be treated in three parts.

First, Abelard urged an essentially historical approach. It was necessary to appreciate the usage of words: 'A particular bar to understanding is the unfamiliar language and the different meaning of a great many identical words, since the same word is used sometimes with one and sometimes with another meaning.'⁸⁵ A genuine and accurate text was equally important: 'We should also ... take great care that we are not being deceived by a false attribution or by corruption of the text itself.'⁸⁶ The whole corpus of an individual's work had also to be considered since he might have altered his position: 'I think that we should no less consider whether these extracts produced from the writings of the saints are among those which were retracted by them in another place, and were corrected when the truth later became known.'⁸⁷ It was also important not to assume that a writer accepted all the views which he described: 'We should also consider whether the saints were making a pronouncement according to the opinion of others rather than according to their own.'⁸⁸ The writer's intention was crucial: 'When different things are said about the same matter, it is necessary to discuss thoroughly what is intended as a binding precept and what as a dispensation relaxing the law or an exhortation to perfection, so that we may seek to resolve the conflict by taking into account the difference of intentions.'⁸⁹ Finally, the context had to be considered: 'It is necessary to bear in mind the occasion and the reasons for dispensations, because what is permitted at one time is often found to be prohibited

⁸⁴ Abelard, Prologue to the *Sic et Non*, in B. Pullan, *Sources for the History of Medieval Europe from the Mid-Eighth Century to the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1966), p. 99.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* ⁸⁸ *Ibid.* ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

at another.⁹⁰ Abelard's first approach therefore depended on various forms of historical analysis.

Second, Abelard outlined another approach to be used if the first one failed. This involved comparing the authorities and preferring those that occupied a higher place in a set hierarchy. The middle position in this hierarchy was occupied by the Church Fathers amongst whose writings 'there appear to be certain things which have been propounded and written down erroneously'.⁹¹ At the top of the hierarchy were the scriptures:

The outstanding canonical authority of the Old and New Testaments is in a different category from the books of later writers. If anything in the Bible strikes you as absurd, it is not permissible to say: 'The author of this book did not uphold the truth', but that either the manuscript is false, or the translator made a mistake, or that you do not understand it.⁹²

At the bottom of the hierarchy were recent scholars. Unless their arguments were established by reason or superior authority, one was free to judge 'the little works of later men' as one saw fit.⁹³

Third, Abelard indicated the pedagogical function of the *Sic et Non* and the way of thinking which he wanted to inculcate. He had gathered apparently contradictory authorities to 'arouse inexperienced readers to the most vigorous activity in seeking out the truth'.⁹⁴ So this was an exercise book for students, and the contradictions were left unresolved to stimulate students to think in certain ways. First, as we have seen before, they had to ask questions, '[f]or assiduous and frequent asking of questions is termed the first key to wisdom'.⁹⁵ Second, they had to doubt, 'for by doubting we come to inquiry and by inquiring we perceive the truth'.⁹⁶ Abelard liked to be provocative and, bearing in mind the issues which the *Sic et Non* raised, urging 'inexperienced readers' to experience doubt was one of his most provocative statements.

The historical approach to textual analysis of authorities was not, however, unique to Abelard and he did not invent it. Indeed, many of the principles articulated in the prologue to the *Sic et Non* had been practised earlier by Anselm of Laon and his students, a reminder that Abelard's judgements of other scholars should not be accepted too readily.⁹⁷ Moreover, collecting authorities which contradicted each other with regard to theological issues did not have to be a contentious exercise. A generation later, another such collection became a far more successful

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁹² *Ibid.* ⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.* ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ M. L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1994), vol. 1, p. 44.

textbook than the *Sic et Non*. It was written by Peter Lombard who was born in the region of Novarra in Lombardy, between 1095 and 1100. Having studied at Rheims, he came to Paris in 1136 where he emerged as a master in the 1140s and taught at the cathedral school of Notre Dame. He became bishop of Paris in 1159 and died the following year. The final version of his *Four Books of the Sentences* appeared between 1155 and 1157, and it became the single most important textbook in theology for the rest of the middle ages. Like the *Sic et Non*, it raised theological issues and in each case provided extracts from authoritative texts. But unlike Abelard, Peter Lombard applied the methods which Abelard had championed and gave a judgement. He thus demonstrated that it was possible to use dialectic in theology and to examine authoritative texts critically without raising doubts in the minds of the young and inexperienced.⁹⁸

A similar concern to collect and analyse authoritative texts lay at the heart of the development of legal studies in the twelfth century. Collections of canons had a long history as churchmen wrestled with the mass of material from the Bible, the Fathers, church councils and papal decrees which constituted the law of the church. But in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, methods for dealing with these texts were put forward. An influential example was produced by Ivo of Chartres, who died in 1115. He made two collections of canons, a huge one entitled the *Decretum* and a shorter one called the *Panormia*. The latter was widely used in Europe and its prologue outlined a method for interpreting contradictory texts. In many respects Ivo anticipated Abelard in his historical approach. Contradictions might be resolved through examination of context and authenticity. Failing this, there was a hierarchy of ecclesiastical jurisdictions against which the texts could be tested, with, for example, general councils taking precedence over provincial councils; this made it possible to accept one law rather than another. The key developments, however, took place in Italy where the reputation of Irnerius for the study of Roman law had helped Bologna to become Europe's most important centre for legal studies in the first half of the twelfth century. In Bologna the legal equivalent of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* is referred to as Gratian's *Decretum*, or the *Concordia discordantium canonum*, which can be translated as 'A Harmony of Conflicting Canons'. It is now known, however, that a first recension was probably produced by Gratian, about whom little is known, except that he is generally held to have been a monk, and a second recension by at least one

⁹⁸ For the life of Peter Lombard, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 15–23; P. W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 34–53.

other lawyer. Looking at one problem after another, the *Decretum* cited contradictory laws and then used the kind of method that had been advocated by Ivo and others to argue to a solution, and it very quickly became the basic medieval textbook of canon law.⁹⁹

Sense perception

Thus far it would seem that twelfth-century scholars pursued knowledge without reference to sense perception. Dialectic and the interpretation of authoritative texts depended on analysis of words, reflection on the processes of thought and attention to historical context. What about knowledge of the physical universe? Was no value ever attached to knowledge based on sense perception? In this regard historians looking for the origins of modern science have turned to the work of Adelard of Bath. A layman who lived from about 1080 to 1152, Adelard grew up in Bath and studied at Tours and Laon before embarking on travels which took him to Southern Italy, Sicily, Syria and Palestine. He travelled in search of the learning of the Arabs and indeed he translated many works from Arabic.¹⁰⁰ His *Questiones Naturales*, or 'Natural Questions', addressed seventy-six questions. The first group were about plants and animals, including 'The reason why plants grow without a seed being sown beforehand' (q. 1) and 'Why some brute animals chew the cud, but others not' (q. 7). The second set were about human beings, beginning with 'Why men do not have innate horns or other armour' (q. 15) and 'By what observation the web of nerves and blood-vessels is detected' (q. 16). The final group of questions concerned earth, water, air and fire, starting with 'Why, or by what nature, the globe of the earth is held up in the middle of the air' (q. 48) and 'Where, if the globe of the earth were bored through, a rock thrown into the hole would end up' (q. 49).¹⁰¹ The *Questiones Naturales* was written as a dialogue between Adelard and his nephew in which the nephew put questions while suggesting safely orthodox answers, and Adelard gave more daring replies.

⁹⁹ For the development of canon law, see J. A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London, 1995). For an immensely significant revision of our understanding of the *Decretum*, see A. Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ For the life of Adelard of Bath, see C. Burnett, 'Introduction', in Adelard of Bath, *Conversations with his Nephew: On the Same and the Different, Questions on Natural Science and On Birds*, ed. and trans. C. Burnett (Cambridge, 1998), pp. xi–xix; L. Cochrane, *Adelard of Bath: The First English Scientist* (London, 1994).

¹⁰¹ For a complete list of questions, see Adelard of Bath, *Questiones Naturales*, in *Conversations with his Nephew*, pp. 85–9.

There are passages in the *Questiones Naturales* which suggest that Adelard valued knowledge based on sense perception and rejected the use of authorities. In question 18 his nephew issued the following challenge:

work out, if you can, the way by which the positions of imagination, reason and memory were discovered by philosophers. For both Aristotle in his *Physics* and others in other works divide them in such a way that they say that imagination operates in the front part of the brain, reason in the middle, memory in the back.¹⁰²

Adelard was happy to take up the challenge and replied:

Whoever first treated these three cells separately, I guess, learnt this very thing by experiencing it with his senses. I suppose there was a man who was well able to use his imagination to gather the forms of things, but he was injured in that front part of his head to such an extent that he lost his power of imagination, but was not deprived of reason and memory. Hence it happened that this was noted by the Philosopher. In a similar way if, by the injury of other parts, other actions of the soul were impeded, it could be stated for certain that single actions operated in single cells, seeing that the cells themselves are separated by some, albeit narrow, divisions. This then is the way that the insensible and intellectual operation of the soul has been revealed from those things which the senses note on the outside.¹⁰³

Here knowledge would seem to begin with precise observation. Elsewhere, moreover, Adelard mocked those who followed authorities:

About animals my conversation with you is difficult. For I have learnt one thing from my Arab masters, with reason as guide, but you another: you follow a halter, being enthralled by the picture of authority. For what else can authority be called other than a halter? As brute animals are led wherever one pleases by a halter, but do not know where or why they are led, and only follow the rope by which they are held, so the authority of written words leads not a few of you into danger, since you are enthralled and bound by brutish credulity.¹⁰⁴

These passages, however, are misleading since Adelard plainly did not reject authority. He apparently granted the Arab masters authoritative status, and at the start of the book he even insisted that he was putting forward their ideas rather than his: 'no one should think that when I am putting forward unknown ideas, I am doing this out of my own head, but that I am giving the views of the studies of the Arabs'.¹⁰⁵ It has been suggested, however, that Adelard said this to protect himself from being censured for the more radical ideas that his book contained, and

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 125. ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103. ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

certainly no Arab sources have been identified.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, he repeatedly acknowledged his debts to Plato and Aristotle, and on one occasion he even invited his nephew to accept a view which he acknowledged that he held because it was Aristotle's: 'In this accept not my own opinion, but that of Aristotle – or rather, because it is his, it's my own.'¹⁰⁷ Despite this particular show of deference, Adelard's point was presumably that authorities should not be followed unthinkingly, and in this respect he shared an attitude that we have already witnessed.

Similarly, Adelard's regard for sense-based knowledge must not be exaggerated. Observation formed the starting-point for many of the questions, but almost certainly he borrowed them from a list already in existence.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, observation rarely provided the basis for his responses, and indeed the limited value of sensory perception was frequently implied. In the first question, for example, the nephew asked why plants grew from dry and apparently seedless earth. Adelard replied that things that could be perceived by the senses were never pure earth, water, air or fire, but always a mixture of the four elements. The earth from which plants grew therefore contained water, air and fire, and it was the interaction of these elements that caused the growth of plants. The true nature of the earth was therefore beyond sense perception: 'For in such a way do these four simple elements compose this one body of the world that, although they exist as components in each composed object, they never appear to the senses as they are.'¹⁰⁹

But if the senses were of limited use, Adelard did not suppose that the physical world was closed to rational exploration. This was the crux of his debate with his nephew. When the nephew asked to what the growth of plants could be attributed 'unless to the wondrous effect of the wondrous divine will', Adelard replied:

It is indeed the will of the Creator that plants should be born from the earth. But that will is not without reason.¹¹⁰

In question 4 the nephew criticized Adelard's argument and demanded that 'the execution of all things should rather be referred to God', to which Adelard responded:

I am not slighting God's role. For whatever exists is from him and through him. Nevertheless, that dependence <on God> is not <to be taken> in blanket

¹⁰⁶ Burnett, 'Introduction', p. xxviii; Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, pp. 54–5.

¹⁰⁷ Adelard of Bath, *Questiones Naturales*, in *Conversations with his Nephew*, p. 221. For his unacknowledged debt to Cicero, see Burnett, 'Introduction', pp. xxvii–xxviii.

¹⁰⁸ Burnett, 'Introduction', pp. xxii–xxiii.

¹⁰⁹ Adelard of Bath, *Questiones Naturales*, in *Conversations with his Nephew*, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

fashion, without distinction. One should attend to this distinction, as far as human knowledge can go; but in the case where human knowledge completely fails, the matter should be referred to God. Thus, since we do not yet grow pale with lack of knowledge, let us return to reason.¹¹¹

The nephew expressed the view that the workings of the natural world could only be explained as the will of God. Adelard, however, argued that God had created a world within which there was an order open to rational explanation.

Myth and poetry

In limiting the role for the senses and yet opening up the natural world as a field for rational enquiry, Adelard was typical of many of his contemporaries. This brings us to the area of twelfth-century thought that most strongly resists definition in modern terms. How were the masters to explore the natural world if not through sense perception? The answer is through myth and poetry. They composed complex stories about allegorical figures or personifications that were almost always female, such as Nature, Divine Providence, Prudence, Philosophy and Reason. Many of these stories were partly or wholly in the form of poetry. This general approach has been variously labelled. It was once thought to have been the product of a distinct group of scholars at Chartres, so references were made to the 'School of Chartres' and to 'Chartrian' scholars. These terms have persisted despite general acknowledgement that the scholars in question did not all study at Chartres and did not form a distinct group at all. The terms 'Platonism' and 'Platonist' have also been used to describe the intellectual trend because of the particular significance of Plato's work to scholars who wrote in this way. Although twelfth-century myth-makers were influenced by many classical texts, the story of creation in Plato's *Timaeus*, part of which was available in Chalcidius' third-century translation, was their single most important model.¹¹²

A striking example of this genre was the *Cosmographia* written by Bernard Silvestris, probably between 1143 and 1148.¹¹³ Little is known of Bernard's life, except that he taught at Tours and dedicated his

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–9.

¹¹² R. W. Southern, 'Humanism and the school of Chartres', in *Medieval Humanism*, pp. 61–85; B. Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Silvester* (Princeton, 1972); W. Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton, 1972).

¹¹³ Bernard Silvestris, *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris*, trans. W. Wetherbee (New York, 1973). For the date, see Stock, *Myth and Science*, p. 11.

Cosmographia to Thierry of Chartres.¹¹⁴ The *Cosmographia* consists of two books. In the first, the *Megacosmus*, Nature complains to Nous (Divine Providence) about the chaotic state of prime matter. Nous agrees to impose order and creates the universe, separating the four elements and overseeing the union of the body and soul of the universe. Bernard then describes the contents of the created universe and the way it works. The second book, the *Microcosmus*, concerns the creation of man. Nous sends Nature on a journey through the heavens to find the two goddesses, Urania (Heavenly Reason) and Physis. Nous then oversees the creation of man as microcosm, with Nature joining together the soul provided by Urania and the body provided by Physis.¹¹⁵ Bernard thus found a way to discuss the creation of the universe and the way it functioned.

But almost any intellectual problem could be treated in this manner, which is why different aspects of twelfth-century thought are so hard to separate and classify. Somewhat earlier, Adelard of Bath wrote his *De eodem et diverso*, or 'On the Same and the Different'. Here Adelard explained to his nephew his reasons for travelling. He told his nephew how he visited Tours to learn from a wise man there. One evening he was just outside the city, by the River Loire, when two women appeared to him. The first, Philocosmia, tried to win him over by inviting him to choose one of her five serving-girls: Riches, Power, Honour, Fame and Pleasure. In praising these maidens, she ridiculed philosophers because they could never agree and urged him to prefer things that could be perceived by the senses to the words of philosophy. The second woman, Philosophia, then spoke up, demonstrating the compatibility of Plato and Aristotle, and rejecting the senses as deceptive, distracting and lacking the power to reflect on themselves: 'the senses cannot sense how they sense or what they themselves are'.¹¹⁶ Adelard then took Philosophia's part against Philocosmia, speaking to good effect:

When I pressed home these points on which I spoke fluently and with passion, Philocosmia, dumbstruck with a kind of shame, covered her face with her gown, withdrew backwards a little with her maidens, and left me in the middle of my speech still ready to say more.¹¹⁷

Rejoicing, Philosophia proceeded to offer Adelard the choice of her maidens: Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry

¹¹⁴ Stock, *Myth and Science*, p. 13

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–17; G. R. Evans, *Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 134–5.

¹¹⁶ Adelard of Bath, *De eodem et diverso*, in *Conversations with his Nephew*, p. 27.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

and Astronomy. She described them in detail and then departed. Adelard thus invented a story that permitted him to describe the seven liberal arts, explain the value of philosophy, and put forward a theory of knowledge.

A far more complex allegory was constructed later in the twelfth century by Alan of Lille. Born in Lille around 1116, Alan studied in Paris and possibly Chartres, before teaching in Paris and probably Montpellier. He died in 1202 or 1203.¹¹⁸ The *Anticlaudianus* was composed between 1181 and 1184.¹¹⁹ The story begins with Nature lamenting her failures and aspiring to create a perfect man. She therefore calls the Virtues down from heaven to assist her. Prudence (Phronesis) approves of the project but points out that while they can make the body, only God can provide the soul. Reason proposes that Prudence should go to heaven to ask God for a soul. Concord persuades Prudence to agree. Seven maidens, the liberal arts, therefore make the parts of a chariot and Concord fits them together. Reason presents five horses to pull the chariot, and they are the five senses. Prudence and Reason set off in the chariot, with Prudence investigating natural phenomena:

The chariot is raised, leaves the ground and in its flight departs into the subtle air. As she passes through the regions of Air, Prudence carefully turns her mind to an investigation of each and every thing to which Air lays successful claim; she examines and makes a deep analysis of the elusive element. She asks herself: what is the material and origin of the clouds; in what way the earth, damp with its own moisture, sends exudations to form clouds and arranges a mantle for itself in the heavens.¹²⁰

Ascending to the stars, the five horses refuse to go further and Reason cannot force them. Another maiden then appears: Theology. Leaving Reason behind, Theology takes Prudence further upwards. They continue to the 'realms of happiness'¹²¹ where angels, saints and the Virgin Mary dwell. Dazzled, Prudence falls into a trance and Theology has to call on her sister, Faith, to revive her fully. Faith gives Prudence a mirror so that she can look at heaven in reflection and without being blinded by the light, and also helps her to understand the mysteries which she sees. Eventually Faith takes her into the presence of God whom she begs for the soul. God agrees and gives her a soul which she takes back

¹¹⁸ For the life of Alan of Lille, see J. J. Sheridan, 'Introduction', in Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus or The Good and Perfect Man*, trans. J. J. Sheridan (Toronto, 1973), pp. 9–11; Evans, *Alan of Lille*, pp. 1–14.

¹¹⁹ Sheridan, 'Introduction', in Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, p. 25; Evans, *Alan of Lille*, p. 14.

¹²⁰ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, p. 126.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150

down to Nature. Nature then makes a body from earth, water, air and fire. Concord, aided by Arithmetic and Music, joins body and soul. The New Man is perfected by gifts from the Virtues, Reason and the liberal arts. Rumours about the New Man have spread, however, and Allecto leads the Vices against him. Nature and the Virtues assist the New Man in the ensuing battle. The New Man triumphs and rules the earth where the Virtues can now reside. This was a story which enabled Alan both to discuss the workings of the universe and to outline a theory of knowledge, including theology and faith as well as philosophy. As Alan himself put it: 'there emerge in this work the rules of grammatical syntax, the maxims of dialectical discourse, the accepted ideas of oratorical rhetoric, the wonders of mathematical lore, the melody of music, the principles of geometry, theories about writing, the excellence of the dignity of astronomy, [and] a view of the celestial theophany'.¹²²

The use of myth and poetry rested upon carefully worked-out theories about allegory in which the key terms were *involutrum* and *integumentum*.¹²³ Originally both words referred to a physical covering, but they came to mean an allegorical covering beneath which ideas were deliberately hidden within a myth which was not straightforwardly Christian. It was believed that many classical works had been written in this way, and that concealed meanings could therefore be discovered within them. Viewed in this way, there was much to be learned from works like the *Timaeus* which offered accounts of creation that, taken literally, contradicted Christian beliefs.¹²⁴ As we have seen, scholars also set out to write works which explored truth through allegory. It is impossible to do justice to long and complex works in brief summaries, but it should be clear from the examples described above that these were texts designed to work at different levels. As Alan of Lille commented in the Prose Prologue to the *Anticlaudianus*: 'in this work the sweetness of the literal sense will soothe the ears of boys, the moral instruction will inspire the mind on the road to perfection, the sharper subtlety of the allegory will whet the advanced intellect.'¹²⁵ As a result, such works were in many respects imprecise and open to many readings. They expressed a recognition of the inadequacy of language to cope with their chosen themes and an attempt to go beyond it, to explore what was beyond words. They frequently involved reflection about language and poetry themselves; in other words, they were not only about what was beyond

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 41–2.

¹²³ Stock, *Myth and Science*, pp. 11–62; Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, pp. 11–73.

¹²⁴ Stock, *Myth and Science*, p. 53; Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, pp. 38–9.

¹²⁵ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, pp. 40–1.

words, but about the process of going beyond.¹²⁶ While they shared a common concern with language and interpretation, they were in other respects the very opposite of the dry technicality of dialectic and analysis through historical criticism and systematic textual comparison.

Diversity and conflict

The diversity within the work of the twelfth-century schools encouraged intense debate about what ought properly to have been going on, and twelfth-century schoolmen were bitter in their criticism of each other.¹²⁷ John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*, for example, not only defended logic against its detractors, but also contained a stinging critique of those who misused it. After nearly twelve years in the schools, John returned to the Mont Sainte Geneviève, where he had first studied dialectic under Abelard. Those who had been his fellow students were still there working on dialectic and John wanted to check on their progress. He was not impressed:

I found them just as, and where, they were when I had left them. They did not seem to have progressed as much as a hand's span. Not a single tiny [new] proposition had they added toward the solution of the old problems. They themselves remained involved in and occupied with the same questions whereby they used to stir their students. They had changed in but one regard: they had unlearned moderation: they no longer knew restraint. And this to such an extent that their recovery was a matter of despair. I was accordingly convinced by experience of something which can easily be inferred [by reason]: that just as dialectic expedites other studies, so, if left alone by itself, it lies powerless and sterile. For if it is to fecundate the soul to bear the fruits of philosophy, logic must conceive from an external source.¹²⁸

John was disgusted to find that they were debating the same old problems without finding any new solutions. Most importantly, they had failed to grasp that dialectic was useless unless applied to other branches of learning. This was a point that John developed:

Although it does not rise to other problems, dialectic resolves questions relative to itself. Thus it supplies the answers to such problems as: 'Is affirmation also enunciation?' and 'Can two contradictory propositions be simultaneously true?' But anyone can see what [little] practical utility such information has in itself, apart from its application to particular cases. Dialectic, pure and simple, hardly ever investigates such questions as: 'Is pleasure good?' 'Should virtue

¹²⁶ See the comments of Stock, *Myth and Science*, pp. 229–30, Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, pp. 67, 72.

¹²⁷ For a detailed and brilliant account, see Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*.

¹²⁸ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, p. 100.

be preferred to aught else?’ ‘Do good habits exist in the highest state?’ and ‘Should one labour when one is in need?’ But upon the answer to problems such as these, depends whether or not our life will result in the attainment of happiness and salvation.¹²⁹

John’s key point was therefore that scholars preoccupied by dialectic alone failed to address ethical issues which were crucial to salvation. Pure dialecticians served no moral purpose.

John was equally critical of the masters who were obsessed with the problem of universals. They were driven by ambition and the need to establish a reputation:

Rarely, if ever, do we find a teacher who is content to follow in the footsteps of his master. Each, to make a name for himself, coins his own special error.¹³⁰

Moreover, they baffled their students by tackling difficult issues when they were supposed to be teaching the basics:

Instruction in elementary logic does not ... constitute the proper occasion for such procedure. Simplicity, brevity, and easy subject matter are, so far as is possible, appropriate in introductory studies ... Nevertheless, at present, all are here [in introductory logical studies] declaiming on the nature of universals, and attempting to explain ... what is really a most profound question, and a matter [that should be reserved] for more advanced studies.¹³¹

Consequently they placed too much ‘on the frail shoulders of their students’ and neglected ‘proper order in teaching’.¹³² To cap it all, John considered that many of them were just ‘wrangling over words, rather than disputing about facts’, and their opinions were little different from each other ‘as would be shown if it were possible to compare their meanings’.¹³³

Alan of Lille conveyed the difference between good and bad scholarship in sexual terms. He wrote the *Plaint of Nature* in the 1160s.¹³⁴ At the start the poet laments, deploring the homosexual acts which have become common. A woman then appears who turns out to be Nature. Nature’s crown and clothes are described in detail, for there the whole of creation is portrayed. Where man is represented, however, her tunic is

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1. ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112. ¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹³⁴ For dating and summaries of this work, see N. M. Häring, ‘Alan of Lille, <<De Planctu naturae>>’, *Studi Medievali*, third series, 19 (1978): 797–897 at 797, 804–5; J. J. Sheridan, ‘Introduction’, in Alan of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, trans. J. J. Sheridan (Toronto, 1980), pp. 31–45; J. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille’s Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), pp. 9–10.

torn. Moreover, Nature is stricken by grief. There follows a dialogue in which Nature replies to the poet's questions. She explains that she weeps because man alone disobeys her law with his sexual perversions. She tells how Venus abused the powers which Nature had delegated to her. Nature then describes a host of Vices before the Virtues appear. Finally Genius arrives and reads a sentence of excommunication directed against those who break Nature's laws. The poet then awakes.

In condemning homosexual acts, Alan made repeated use of grammatical metaphors. This was the case at the start of the work when the poet offers his lament:

Alas! Where has Nature with her fair form betaken herself? Where have the pattern of morals, the norm of chastity, the love of modesty gone? Nature weeps, moral laws get no hearing, modesty, totally dispossessed of her ancient high estate, is sent into exile. The active sex shudders in disgrace as it sees itself degenerate into the passive sex. A man turned woman blackens the fair name of his sex. The witchcraft of Venus turns him into a hermaphrodite. He is subject and predicate: one and the same term is given a double application. Man here extends too far the laws of grammar. Becoming a barbarian in grammar, he disclaims the manhood given him by Nature.¹³⁵

In the sexual act, Alan regarded the man as active and the woman as passive. When both roles were taken by men, it was as if a word were performing two opposite grammatical functions, as subject and predicate. Putting it the other way round, adopting such a perverse grammatical practice was as if to abandon true masculinity.

Alan used similar imagery in Nature's complaint:

Man alone turns with scorn from the modulated strains of my cithern and runs deranged to the notes of mad Orpheus' lyre. For the human race, fallen from its high estate, adopts a highly irregular (grammatical) change [metaplasm] when it inverts the rules of Venus by introducing barbarisms in its arrangement of genders. Thus man, his sex changed by a ruleless Venus, in defiance of due order, by his arrangement changes what is a straightforward attribute of his. Abandoning in his deviation the true script of Venus, he is proved to be a sophistic pseudographer.¹³⁶

A metaplasm was a change to a word in verse made necessary by the metre. A barbarism was a similar alteration to a word, but in prose and therefore without justification.¹³⁷ In this case, however, even the

¹³⁵ Alan of Lille, *Plaint of Nature*, pp. 67–8; see also Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex*, p. 15.

¹³⁶ Alan of Lille, *Plaint of Nature*, pp. 133–4; see also Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex*, p. 22.

¹³⁷ Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex*, p. 22.

metaplasm was inappropriate. Man was therefore making unnecessary and improper changes to the gender of words, just as he was doing to himself. He was a false writer and a false man.

Grammatical metaphor runs throughout the *Plaint of Nature*. Indeed the work only makes sense if the metaphor is understood. Read one way, Alan was using the imagery of good and bad grammar to attack homosexual acts as perverse sexual deviancy. Read another way, however, Alan was condemning bad grammar, and perhaps bad scholarship more generally, as equivalent to sexual perversion. Good grammar and properly conducted scholarship, however, were deemed to possess the creative power of procreative sex, and the good scholar embodied pure and unadulterated masculinity. This was just one of the most striking ways in which scholars expressed their desire to condemn false learning and praise legitimate scholarship.

Towards universities

It was out of this world that universities emerged at the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century. This process will be examined further in a later chapter, but it is worth pointing out key features of the twelfth-century schools which took on growing importance in the second half of the century and were to prove decisive in the emergence of stable institutions of learning.

In purely pedagogical terms, there was a growing consensus about the basic education that all students had to be given and about the ways in which they might specialize subsequently. The use of dialectic and syllogistic reasoning, for example, became increasingly commonplace and uncontroversial. Eventually all men who went to the schools and later the universities received a more or less standard training in these methods at an early stage in their intellectual formation, an experience that shaped their language and their thought processes. Furthermore, the emergence of widely accepted textbooks was crucial in defining areas for systematic teaching and research. Gratian's *Decretum* and Peter Lombard's *Sentences* were the most significant examples. Other scholars produced similar works, reflecting a general desire for order, but the *Decretum* and the *Sentences* answered common needs most effectively. These works became standard because they included a wide range of material and set it within an overall structure that seemed coherent and usable to other scholars. The *Sentences*, for example, was divided into four books: Book 1 concerned God, Book 2 examined the creation, Book 3 looked at Christ and the

virtues, and Book 4 focused on the sacraments, death, judgement, hell and heaven.¹³⁸ These standard works were also popular because they were the products of teaching and could easily form the basis of an ordered curriculum. They were supported by other standard works of reference. From the early twelfth century, Anselm of Laon began to compile comments, or glosses, on the Bible from a variety of sources, chiefly patristic and Carolingian, and to insert them in the margins and between the lines of the biblical text. Anselm died in 1117 and the process was continued by his colleagues and pupils, notably his brother Ralph and Gilbert of Auxerre. Although the resulting text remained subject to variation, it nevertheless became accepted as the standard gloss on the Bible, or the *Glossa ordinaria*.¹³⁹ Around 1170, Peter Comestor produced the *Historia Scholastica*. Peter taught at the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris in the 1160s and became chancellor. The *Historia Scholastica* was a work of history based chiefly on the Bible.¹⁴⁰ Books like these established common ground for scholars working in a given field and the means with which to cover it efficiently. All students would therefore be expected to cover that ground, and masters had clear points of reference which they could use to point up the originality of their own contributions.¹⁴¹ With the increasingly clear definition of both methods and fields of study, the notion of academic disciplines emerged.¹⁴² While the meaning of terms like ‘theology’ remained contentious, by the end of the twelfth century debates about their meaning followed well-established lines. Although still

¹³⁸ On Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, see P. Biller, *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 29–30, 33–7; Colish, *Peter Lombard*, vol. 1, pp. 77–90; N. Spatz, ‘Approaches and attitudes to a new theology textbook: the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard’, in N. van Deusen (ed.), *The Intellectual Climate of the Early University: Essays in Honor of Otto Gründler* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1997), pp. 27–52. On Gratian’s *Decretum*, especially the stages in its compilation and the identity of its compiler or compilers, see J. A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 96–105; Winroth, *Making of Gratian’s Decretum*.

¹³⁹ B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 49–51, 56, 60–6; Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, pp. 2, 12–13, 17–33, 41–56, 73–6.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, S. R. Daly, ‘Peter Comestor: Master of Histories’, *Speculum* 32 (1957): 62–73 at 67, 70–1; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, pp. 190–1; D. Luscombe, ‘Peter Comestor’, in K. Walsh and D. Wood (eds.), *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 109–29; J. H. Morey, ‘Peter Comestor, biblical paraphrase, and the medieval popular Bible’, *Speculum* 68 (1993): 6–35 at 6–16; M. M. Mulchahey, ‘*First the Bow is Bent*’: *Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 481–2; Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, pp. 178–80.

¹⁴¹ See the comments of Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, p. 218.

¹⁴² See G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology: The Beginnings of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford, 1980), esp. pp. 27–56.

contested, there was nevertheless a conceptual framework to which institutional structures could be related.

The status and identity of the men who worked in the schools were very significantly reinforced by the growing involvement of external political powers in their affairs. In 1155 the emperor Frederick I issued a decree in Italy known as the *Authentica Habita*. He granted his 'dutiful love to all scholars who are travelling for the sake of their studies, and especially to teachers of the divine and sacred laws: that they and their representatives may safely come to the places in which letters are studied and safely live in them'. He decreed that 'no one shall be so bold as to presume to do any injury to scholars'. Moreover, no one was 'to cause them any loss on account of a debt incurred by another man from the same district', which meant that scholars were not to be held liable for debts incurred by other scholars from the same place of origin. Having laid down penalties for infringement of these laws, Frederick went on to decree that whenever a suit was brought against scholars they could choose whether the case should be heard before their own master or before the local bishop.¹⁴³ The decree was presumably aimed at scholars in the emperor's Italian possessions, and perhaps Bologna in particular since it was issued in response to a request from masters and students from that city.¹⁴⁴ Whatever its effect, it offered the prospect of protection and a distinct legal identity, and a model that might be taken up elsewhere.

In the early 1170s Pope Alexander III intervened to defend scholars against the local clergy at Rheims.¹⁴⁵ The scholars claimed that after reproaching a local priest for unseemly behaviour they had been physically assaulted and excommunicated. In ordering an enquiry into these events, the pope accepted the scholars' claim to 'possess the liberty that no one shall dare to lay violent hands upon them or to promulgate an ecclesiastical sentence so long as they wish to remain under the jurisdiction of their own master'.¹⁴⁶ Again, scholars were receiving protection and recognition of a distinct legal status. Moreover, both emperor and pope put the bond between master and student at the heart of their identity.

Financial support was also an issue of fundamental concern to both masters and students. In 1179 a decree of the third Lateran Council sought to ensure that the church would provide consistent backing:

¹⁴³ Pullan, *Sources*, pp. 104–5.

¹⁴⁴ Brundage, *Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, pp. 88–9.

¹⁴⁵ *University Records*, no. 8, pp. 19–20.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 8, p. 20.

Since the church of God as a kindly mother is held to provide for those needs which pertain to physical welfare and those which contribute to the progress of souls, lest the opportunity of reading and education be denied poor children who cannot be aided by the resources of their parents, let some sufficient benefice be set aside in every cathedral church for a master who shall teach the clergy of the same church and poor scholars gratis, whereby the need for a teacher shall be met and the way to knowledge opened to learners. In other churches, too, and monasteries, if in time past any provision has been made for this purpose, let it be reestablished. And for the permission to teach let no one demand any fee whatever, or ask anything from teachers under the cover of some custom, or forbid any fit person to teach if he seeks permission.¹⁴⁷

Every cathedral was to employ a master, and he was not to charge for teaching the clergy and poor students. If masters were fit to teach, they were not to be forbidden to teach, not charged for permission. Almost certainly the decree was issued in response to a petition and it was probably limited in its effect: certainly it was repeated subsequently. It strongly suggests, however, that deliberate attempts were being made to put academic careers on more secure foundations.

The academic career also became more clearly defined and more secure when less frequent travelling was involved. Starting out as a student, for example, became much less of a risk once distinct traditions of learning began to develop in different places, and scholars specializing in a particular discipline started to gather in the towns that were most appropriate. Thus Bologna became known as the leading centre for legal studies, and Paris was recognized as pre-eminent in philosophy and theology. Students therefore knew where to go to find the leading masters in their chosen field. They still had to travel in pursuit of learning, but wandering was increasingly a thing of the past.

For most of the twelfth century, however, it was far from clear that any of these developments would lead to the emergence of stable academic institutions. The schools, especially in the first half of the century, were essentially chaotic. Many masters and students were swept up in their enthusiasm for dialectic and highly technical forms of argument. They also collected and compared authoritative texts, subjecting them to rigorous historical analysis. They had great confidence in the value of asking questions and challenging accepted interpretations, and they were determined to apply their methods to knowledge of God. At the same time, a belief in the value of allegorical interpretation led some scholars to deploy myth and poetry in the pursuit of truth. There was strong disagreement about the validity of different intellectual methods and procedures, and this found expression in lively criticism. This

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 9, p. 21.

intellectual diversity flourished in a highly competitive environment and within very loose institutional structures. Students were extremely mobile and their choices shaped the careers of their masters, whose reputations were therefore a crucial part of their success. If successful, however, a man could make a career out of teaching in the schools, and he might also have the opportunity to move on to another career in administration and high office. The personal stakes were very high and this doubtless contributed to the vigour with which men criticized each other. Their disorderly sense of adventure and competition gave both masters and students a strong sense of themselves as a new and distinct social group. Others could not fail to notice and to react.