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# *Ratio aut auctores*? Reason, Authority and the Anagogic Ascent in the Twelfth Century

**Jack Cunningham**

Theology Department, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln LN1 3DY, UK; jack.cunningham@bishopg.ac.uk

**Abstract:** In the twelfth century, certain thinkers in the north of Europe were exalting human reason in a manner that had not been seen since the time of the ancient philosophers. Adelard of Bath, William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres and Peter Abelard all championed *ratio* in a way that seemed to challenge the hegemony of learning that rested securely with the authority of scripture, the testament of the Fathers and the canons of the established councils. In so doing, it represented a significantly different approach from the firmly established 'authors' (*auctores*) as certain scholars pursued their learning, and indeed even divine ascent, via other avenues. Even the visionary Hildegard von Bingen set enormous stock in rationality. This paper will discuss the use of reason for the anagogic ascent to the divine in order to trace its roots to a Platonic understanding of the universe in tandem with a highly positive anthropology that allowed for a bold reassessment of human capabilities, as well as a new appreciation of nature.

**Keywords:** reason; authority; cosmography; anagogic ascent



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## 1. Introduction

The *Quaestiones Naturales* of Adelard of Bath (c.1080–c.1152) records a response to his nephew who is alarmed that he should apparently set so much store by the learning of the Arabs he has met on his sojourns in the Middle East. Adelard's defence is indicative of a remarkable intellectual development that was taking place in Latin Europe at this time, which was characterised by a new attitude toward the *auctoritas patrum* (authority of the Fathers) concomitant with a vitalised interest in the study of nature. The uncle rather abruptly lets his nephew know in no uncertain terms that his learning from the schools of France is '*inconstans*' (insecure), its principal failing being that it has too great a respect for authority. As we read the *Quaestiones*, it becomes clear that what the author has primarily imbibed on his learning tour is not only factual or theoretical, it is also a rationalism based on observation. Contrasting this approach with that of his nephew, he tells him,

> I with reason for my guide have learned one thing from my Arab teachers—you something different—dazzled by the outward show of authority you wear a headstall, for what else would we call authority but a headstall? Just as brute animals are led by headstalls where one pleases so many of you are led into danger by the authority of writers.[1]

What is so startling about this assertion is that it flies in the face of the prevailing understanding of how we might come to know the natural world. A common Christian conception was that the full knowledge afforded to humanity at Creation had been lost or, at the very least, radically distorted by the Fall. Since then, revelation and the endeavours of a few chosen individuals who had laboured in an epoch which ran roughly from the fourth century BCE to the fourth CE had done much to restore that knowledge. It was, therefore, the task of the medieval scholar not to make new discoveries, but rather to harmonise and elucidate scripture, the Church Fathers and those philosophers deemed appropriate. Regardless of this well-established *modus operandi*, the twelfth century witnessed a remarkable number of writers who valued enormously the potential of the human faculty of *ratio*,

which they were capable of exulting to a level that had not been seen before in the history of Christianity. At the same time, there was a shift away from the perception of nature as under the direct control of God toward an appreciation of it as a self-operating, ordered and harmonious entity, which meant that scholars, armed with the tool of reason, were liberated from the often-confining orthodoxies that had long been regarded as setting the boundaries of knowledge permitted to humanity. *Curiositas*, formerly seen as a hubristic vanity, instead became a virtue. Its guidebooks were no longer exclusively the Bible and the Fathers, but observation, natural philosophy and number. It is no surprise that conservatively minded Churchmen regarded such developments with alarm and were angered by what they saw as its arrogant lack of humility. Such developments have previously been discussed under the idea of a 'twelfth-century renaissance', an interpretation that can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Ampère's much-admired work *Histoire littéraire de la France avant le douzième Siècle* in 1839. This conception was ringingly endorsed by Charles Haskins in the twentieth century and received later elaboration from great luminaries of medieval studies such as Marie-Dominique Chenu, Jean Leclercq and Andreas Speer.[2]

Discussions of this century have in the past tended to concern themselves with explorations of what we would call the 'humanism' that seemingly characterised the mindsets of its leading players. This is entirely appropriate, since the rival of classical texts and a strong sense of the dignity of human nature were important features of the scholarship of this age. However, there is a danger that this can lead to an anachronistic inclination to regard what was happening as indicative of a nascent secularisation, or even a pre-Enlightenment kick against the suffocating religiosity of medieval society. It is argued here that, far from interpreting this phenomenon as a type of proto-deism or even the first intimation of secular science, the intent of these scholars should be seen as profoundly religious, and ultimately concerned with a type of anagogic rise to God. Here, it is important to acknowledge that none of the authors discussed below would have employed the Greek term *anagoge* (ἀναγωγή), nor would they have understood the methods to incorporate its original mysticism. Nevertheless, what they proposed and undertook was much more than a learning programme, its ultimate aim being mystical union with the divine, an endeavour best understood as a reason-based anagogic ascent.

## 2. The Primacy of Reason and the *causae rerum*

Adelard writes in *Quaestiones* that his great learning tour took him to Antioch. Tarsus and Mopuestia are also mentioned in his other major work, *De eodem et diverso* (*On the same and different*), which he dedicated to the Bishop of Syracuse. In 1120, he returned to the West of England, joining a circle of clerical mathematicians and astronomers in which his scholarly contribution was engaged primarily with making Arab astronomy and geometry accessible to the Latin world. He was clearly intrigued by the unifying patterns which provide much of the focus of *Quaestiones*. Here, he addresses seventy-six questions about nature for which the answers he presents concern the unity of knowledge about the soul and the universe. Tina Stiefel numbered Adelard among a group of contemporaries who had managed to garner a new confidence in the power of reason to uncover the mysteries of nature. She quotes one of his proud celebrations of reason:

> Although man is not armed by nature, nor is naturally swiftest in flight, yet he has that which is better by far and worth more-that is reason. For by the possession of this function he exceeds the beasts to such an extent that he subdues them.[3]

Adelard sets out to address questions through an explanation of things that are hidden because he regards nature as 'without a book', meaning that it cannot be read as a text in the way that scripture can. However, observations of nature supplement knowledge that we have gathered from books. To accomplish this effectively, it is imperative to approach reading in a particular way: it is vital to process the knowledge we encounter in a text, and most importantly of all, we must engage with authority critically whilst working under the primacy of reason as we pursue the *causae rerum* (causes of things).[4] Such an injunction reflects a desire to privilege reason over revelation, an impulse that caused Charles Burnett

to comment that 'his God was the God of Aristotle rather than that of St Paul.' It was a move of considerable bravery and one it is claimed that, together with Thierry of Chartres and William of Conches, 'precipitated a conceptual revolution' (Cochrane 1994, p. 1). Certainly, like the greatest scholars of the schools of Northern France, he displayed a level of humanism that supplied him with confidence enough to turn to the pagan Greeks and Latins, and for this, he deserves his place among their ranks. Yet, as Burnett pointed out, what makes him unique among his generation is that he was unafraid also to draw so fruitfully from the classics of the Arabian world.[5]

Adelard's cosmology in *Quaestiones* draws heavily on Plato's *Timaeus*. Stiefel described him as among a group of men in the early twelfth century for whom Plato's text provided a 'compelling reason for engaging in a sustained investigation of the cosmos.'[6] This is remarkable given that they only had access to part of the work via a translation by Calcidius. Additionally, Adelard's travels had brought him into contact with Cicero's *De natura deorum* (rarely used at his time). For our purposes here, it is important to note that the beginning of this work sets out a methodology which aims to use rational arguments over authority (Adelard of Bath 1998).

The *Quaestiones* ends rather abruptly with a tantalisingly unanswered query as to whether reason alone and 'keeping away the flattery of authority' could prove that God exists. As if Adelard is cautious about making too high a claim for the rational faculty, he dodges the question by claiming that he would rather disprove what is not, rather than prove what is. He announces instead that it is time for bed and that their discussion will be taken up the next day. Whether the matter was ever discussed again we are not told. What is clear, however, is that Adelard had already made his great contribution to the advancement of science. By investigating the causes of natural processes, he had played a major part in uncovering its rationality. In this way, he was able to insist that '*rerum causae cum ratione constant*,'—the causes of things are consistent with reason[7]—and in doing so, he played a significant part in the promotion and defence of enquiry.

### 3. The Ontological Hierarchy and the Ladder of Learning

The *Tractatus de sex dierum* (Treatise on the six days—*Tsd*) by Thierry of Chartres (c.1100–c.1150) is without precedent in the history of Christian exegesis for the simple, though audacious, reason that its starting point is not scripture, or even Patristics, but natural science. It has been described as a 'nearly perfect' representation of the Chartrian ideal that saw nature and the Bible as an entirely unified source (Otten 1995, p. 272). Thierry openly states that his intention is to examine the origins of the universe *ad litteram* (literally), adding that it had already been adequately explored theologically. Giulio D'Onofrio described what Thierry clearly regarded as a moral duty:

> According to Theodoric [Thierry] it is therefore permissible and even indispensable to offer an exclusively physical, that is historical and literal reading of that text now that its allegorical, spiritual, and moral depths have been sufficiently studied and explained by the Fathers of the Church.
>
> (D'Onofrio 2008, p. 211)

The great French philosopher historian Etienne Gilson described this daring approach as an 'experimental justification of Genesis' (Gilson 1928, p. 23). Scholars like Thierry had gathered from Plato and Calcidius the classical principle of causality, that is, whatever comes to be must be brought into being by the action of some cause. A dictum that makes it incumbent on the enquiring mind to '*reddere rationem*' (find the reason). Raymond Klibansky maintains that the consistent application of the principle of causality was the 'privilege of a few outstanding minds', and he identifies the most momentous aspect of Thierry's thinking as the cosmological speculation we meet with in the *Tsd* (Klibansky 1961, pp. 6–7). His endeavour to describe the origins of the universe beyond the most initial of God's *fiats*, without recourse to the supernatural, was a pivotal moment in the development of thought; for the first time in the history of Christianity, cosmology was released from the restrictions of dogma. Tellingly, the author of Genesis is referred to as '*prudentissimus philosophorum*

*Moyses*'—Moses, the wisest of philosophers.[8] However, the *Tsd* must not be regarded as the work of some kind of proto-deist; its primary purpose was to assert that knowledge of the Creator may be acquired through his works and that, consequently, learning was a legitimate way to reach God. We must keep in mind that the ultimate purpose of this approach was to illustrate how science supports the Biblical account. It is also significant that he is careful to treat the question of causes in paragraphs 2–3 separately from temporal succession, which is treated in 4–17. In so doing, he preserves the primacy of metaphysical causes over the secondary physical causes.

There is an optimism in Thierry that is typical of a number of writers at this time. They possessed a high regard for their own abilities, which allowed them confidence to trust that human reason was capable of attaining great heights. This attitude was summarised in a poem in which Thierry is presented as seeing further even than the greatest philosophers that preceded him, not by means of revelation, but through scientific enquiry.

> His eagle eye could clearly see
> through each perplexed obscurity
> of all the seven liberal arts.
> He knew them well in all their parts,
> and made quite clear to everyone
> truths that for Plato dimly shone.[9]

In common with Adelard, fundamental to Thierry's method, was a new appreciation that number underscored all that occurred in the ordered universe. The only text of Plato that was available to him was the *Timaeus*, in which he encountered a World Soul linking the realm of simplicity, immutability and eternity with a world of multiplicity, change and generation which had been fashioned by the demiurge using harmony and ratios. For this reason, number constituted the source and makeup of all things. More than once in his *De arithmetica,* he explains that everything is made out of number, after the model of number—'*Ad exemplar numeri, dicitur deus res creasse, quia omnia ex discretione, quae est ex numeris, habent esse*' (Caiazzo 2015, p. 8). Similarly, in the *Tsd*, Creation and the creation of number are identical: '*Sed creatio numerorum, rerum est creatio*'.[10] To appreciate the significance of this development in the twelfth century, we have to consider the relationship that Christianity had historically with mathematics. The centuries up until this time might be characterised as ambivalent at best and hostile at worst to the quadrivium. The three language-based subjects of the trivium were regarded as essential training for the student who would become a man of letters and not numbers. For this reason, in the schools there was a strong emphasis on Ciceronian oratory. Indeed, the great orator himself had been averse to mathematics, since it distracted the student from the pursuit of ethics. The men of the schools were Latin and tended to embrace this Ciceronian antagonism, which found its way into ethical handbooks condemning the abacus and algorisms as extraneous to the pursuit of wisdom (Murray 1978, p. 178). Alexander Murray regarded the contribution of scholars such as Thierry as a decisive beginning for what would, in later centuries, become the birth of modern science. Drawing our attention to Galileo's famous declaration that 'This grand book, the universe. . .cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed', he points out that this statement is often regarded as inaugurating classical physics, when in fact it was not just the beginning of a development, but the end of one (Murray 1978, p. 142; Galileo 1842, p. 171).

For Thierry, there existed an ontological hierarchy which neatly corresponded with a ladder of learning. In the first instance, the senses comprehend material bodies. Next, the imagination comprehends the forms in matter, but without the matter in question, such as the idea of a bear. Reason, then, is able to abstract from several material things the form in which they all participate, but only in a way that allows for their possible change. Finally, '*disciplina*' (method/system) is able to perceive pure forms whose simplicity precludes change.[11] This ability is identified by Thierry as '*intellectibilitas*', which is the soul's highest power. By apprehending unity and simplicity, it achieves knowledge of the divine.[12] The

rungs on this ladder, sense, reason, system and intelligibility, are all intrinsically attached to what is existentially human; nowhere does Thierry feel the need to abandon this condition in order to approach a transcendent God. His system makes for a telling comparison with that of the Cistercian abbot William of St. Thierry, who was an inveterate opponent of approaches to the divine that failed to appreciate the fallen state of man. His own method described a long process of ascent to God in which there are three stages whereby one's ontological status is radically altered. It begins with the natural man as *homo animalis* who obeys the authorities and perceives good examples via the senses. There is nothing of Thierry's senses encountering the material world.

> . . .the first stage is to have meticulously investigated what is to be believed concerning the Lord God. The first stage is founded on authority, it is of faith, a form of faith having been founded on the credible witness of established authority.[13]

William asserts that, following progression, there is a state of *homo rationalis* in which worldly things have been relinquished. The ultimate goal is *homo spiritualis*, in which the happy few have reached a state of perfection via the 'affection of grace'.[14] The contrast lies in the fact that Thierry comes to knowledge of, and therefore union with, God through the world, whereas the endpoint of William's theological quest is a mystical union for which it is necessary to leave the rational man behind. Whereas Thierry is happy to look for the Trinity in nature, William is pessimistic about the prospect of a non-human source of good. He tells us, 'Everything which we are and everything which we have of good things we have from God.'[15] That is, the purest encounter with God is an unmediated mystical union.

## 4. Cognitionem Creaturae ad Cognitionem Creatoris

William of Conches' (c.1090–c.1155) writings also show little occasion to consult the established canon with regard to natural philosophy. His authorities, whether scientific, philosophical or poetic, are for the most part Classical. Most frequently, he draws on Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Pliny, Ptolemy, Solinus, Virgil, Macrobius, Martianus Capella and Boethius. From literature, he consults Horace, Ovid, Seneca and Juvenal. References to Christian text are few, limited to Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory and Bede. Most importantly, and in a similar way to Thierry, his understanding of creation and the natural order is formed from his reading of the *Timaeus*. Where they differ is that William is more inclined to consult newly translated sources in medicine and astronomy. In particular, two texts that had been translated in the eleventh century seem to have made a strong impression on him. *Premnon physicus* (The Nature of Man), written c.400 by a bishop named Nemesius, represents a mixture of Neoplatonism and medicine. An even stronger influence was the *Liber pantegni* (complete/perfect book), an encyclopaedia of Hellenistic and Islamic medicine compiled by Constantine Africanus in the eleventh century. In addition, Adelard of Bath is cited in William's *Dragmaticon philosophie* (*Drag.*).

His works betray a natural inclination toward the physical, even when we take into account his metaphysics. William proposed that philosophy and physics were concerned with the same thing, that is, the created world: whereas *philosophus* investigates the facts of existence of things, the *physicus* is interested in the causes of their existence. This has the practical advantage of allowing him to maintain that, whilst the first chapter of Genesis provides us with the facts, it does not supply the causes. The implication is that, by attempting to fill the lacuna, he is doing nothing to impinge on the Holy Book (Shank 2011, p. 88). By taking this approach, William flips the order in which Scriptural texts and natural philosophy might previously have been employed. Instead of beginning with Genesis as the starting point, he began with an enquiry into the structures and harmony of nature which, once established, he could then exemplify with reference to the Bible.

For Thierry and William, the *Timaeus* was perfectly complementary with the account that came to them from Moses, since it allowed for divine omnipotence. In this respect, the Bible and the Platonic dialogues have been described as 'literary cousins' (Howland 2015, pp. 669–70). In both texts, wisdom is a knowledge of the 'whole' and, at

the same time, knowledge of how to live. In both, there is a strong parallel between cosmology and anthropology via the macrocosm and the microcosm (Howland 2015, p. 670). And in both, creation takes place when a deity introduces intelligible order into pre-existing chaos from no other motive than omnibenevolence. For these reasons, the *Timaeus* could be regarded as useful as a scriptural counterpart, not least because the biblical Creation story, for the most part, provides a chronology of events, whilst Plato supplies more of the process (Robbins 1912, p. 222; See, Timaeus 29e-30a).

William's initial major work, the *De philosophia mundi* (*Dpm*), was the first general survey of the universe to make use of medical texts from the Muslim world (Southern 1979, vol. 2, p. 68). In addition, it is replete with references to the '*os Platonis*'—the mouth of Plato. Another unusual feature is that it looks for causes in the natural world instead of moral symbolism. It was denounced by William of St. Thierry, who had assumed for himself a role as a guardian of Latin orthodoxy. The Abbot of St. Thierry was alarmed by William of Conches' ideas on the Trinity and the creation of Eve, the latter of which was considered for purely rational reasons not to have been from Adam's rib, but rather the side of the ground where he slept.[16] Such naturalism caused William of St. Thierry to call him a '*homo physicus*', which was clearly intended to be a pejorative term (William of St. Thierry 2007, 89A. 61). He quickly composed the *De erroribus Guillelmi de Conchis*, a letter which he dispatched to both Bernard of Clairvaux and the Bishop of Chartres, Geoffroy of Lèvres, in which he exaggerated the dangers to orthodoxy he had encountered in the *Dpm*.

> Then in a philosophical, or rather physical way describing the creation of the first man, he first says his body was not made by God but by nature. . .In another place he seems to follow the opinions of some other fatuous philosophers who say that nothing exists beyond bodies and the corporeal; that is there is no God in the world besides a concourse of elements. . .in another he is a manifest Manichee, saying that the soul is created by the good God, but the body by the Principle of Shadows. (Jeauneau 1965, p. 30; French and Cunningham 1996, p. 78)

His denunciation set out to instigate a formal condemnation of William, who was described in graphically apocalyptic language: 'From this serpent's root has come forth a viper.'[17] What angered William of St. Thierry was what he regarded as the impudence of scholars who analysed the mysteries of faith and the cosmos with dangerous and sacrilegious presumptions. William of Conches 'represented everything that was detested by the defenders of monastic wisdom and the *lectio divina*' (French and Cunningham 1996, p. 78). The Abbot's system regarded lessons derived from nature as literal and only the first stage in knowledge. As set out above, the journey to God had to be pursued through the higher stages of allegorical symbolism to divine contemplation. In this respect, he was considerably put out that William of Conches appeared to proffer the first literal phase as a safe way to attain access to the mysteries of faith. William of St. Thierry was also dismayed by what he considered as a challenge to the sole omnipotence of God in the act of Creation by the emphasis on other principles at work. Édouard Jeauneau dramatically stated that the charges brought against William were the same as those that had condemned Socrates; that is, to attempt an understanding of the universe was to question the existence of the gods (Jeauneau 2009, p. 54).

In his *Drag*., the protagonist appears in the text as the *philosophus sine nomine*—nameless philosopher, a title which it has been noted was 'used with subtle irony as a rejoinder to the vehement attack by William of St. Thierry'. The Abbot had dismissed him as '*Obscuri quidem nominis et nullus auctoritatis*'—a certain person of obscure name and no authority.[18] The *Drag*. is partly a development of his earlier work, though its content is wider as it discusses a range of subjects, including theology, physics and biology. The prologue confesses that in updating the *Dpm*, he would be 'omitting certain sections now outdated or wrong,' and elsewhere, he says that he intends to retract youthful errors.[19]

> There is, however, a little book of ours. . .entitled *Philosophia*; it is quite imperfect, as it was composed in our imperfect youth. In the booklet truths are interspersed with falsehoods and many points that ought to be made were omitted.[20]

However, elsewhere, his regret for youthful errors is tempered with a bold defence of his rational approach to philosophy,

> In those matters which concern the Catholic faith or morals it is not permissible to contradict Bede or any of the Church Fathers. . .but in matters of philosophy, if they commit any error, it is permissible to affirm the contrary. For if they were greater than us, they were nevertheless men. (Gregory 1955, p. 241)

William's Platonism differs from that of Thierry of Chartres in that it places its feet more squarely on the ground of the rational and concrete, with less interest in the Ideal World, which he is happy to leave to others whose remit it falls under. As Joan Cadden has indicated, William was a clear example of the emergence and articulation of Western science, and his rhetoric staked out claims for the systematic study of the natural world, 'both in terms of contemporary boundaries and hierarchies of learning' (Cadden 1995, pp. 1–3).

It is important to note that, like Thierry of Chartres, it is wrong to assume that William's goal was to replace the authority of God with that of nature; the desire to replace revelation with reason did not arrive until the seventeenth century. The ultimate aim of both scholars was to demonstrate that uncovering the order of the physical world draws us to the very source of power that is in God. In this way, understanding the structure and harmony of nature had the ultimate aim of knowing and praising its Creator, even if their guidebook was nature itself and not Scripture. William described the sacred endeavour of study as '*. . .quippe cum per cognitionem creaturae ad cognitionem creatoris perveniamus*': As you see, through knowledge of creation we come to knowledge of the Creator.[21] For this reason, certain scholars of the twelfth century were no longer inclined to look at their world as a fallen place that Christian asceticism had previously pressed them to shun. There had been a tendency in Christian theology to regard only the soul and not the body as made in the image and likeness of God. This was not an understanding that was taken up by the Chartrians whose Platonic exemplarism meant that they were persuaded that the whole human was the *imago Dei*. Such anthropological optimism was all part of the humanism of the age, the greatest accomplishment of which has been described as making humans godlike (Jaeger 1994, p. 280). For William, the human was *omnia creatura*, holding something in common with inanimate objects, vegetables, as well as sentient and angelic beings. Humanity was not just the image of the universe; it was its summation, its *conclusio omnium*.[22]

When William does write on the Fall of Adam, he is noticeably scientific in that it is the fallen world affecting humanity rather than vice versa. In Eden, Adam lived in a condition in which the four humours were in equal balance. When he was expelled, he had to live on the bread of his labour, where in the Valley of Tears, work, hunger and sleep deprivation, along with the quality of his food, drink and air, produced an imbalance in him.[23] One has the impression that, for William, the consequences of the Fall were far from catastrophic and may have largely been mitigated. In the human, it is clear that the restorative process will come through education, and with regard to nature, it will come from understanding her imbalances and variations. For this reason, it has been claimed that William's approach to education was a form of 'climate control' (Otten 1995, pp. 66–67). Whatever the case, we see here the humanism of our author, who makes enormous claims for the central role of humanity in the great process of cosmic 'return'.

When we consider this, it is hardly surprising that, with Thierry and William, there is an unusual reticence concerning atonement, eschatology or the essential need of Grace for a lost humanity. In this respect, they contrast sharply with their Victorine or Cistercian contemporaries. Augustinian anthropology appears to be pushed to one side by their high estimation of the faculty of reason, which could not only provide knowledge and understanding of the sensible world, but also, since this world was reflective of God, comprehending it was a sacred endeavour that had the potential to lead us to the divine. There was an arithmetical principle involved in the soul that meant that, by studying the visible world, an individual might achieve true knowledge of the eternal world of Ideas. Like Thierry of Chartres, William's Plato was Pythagorean, meaning that the relationship

between God and matter was one of unity and multiplicity. According to William, reason and understanding are the 'proper light' that guides us to knowledge of creation and its author.[24] When discussing Plato's description of the soul, William described human reason as the 'greatest' because it is what makes us similar to God, 'best' because of reason and understanding and 'first because it rules over the body.'[25] John Newell pointed out that these assertions move reason into domains traditionally reserved for faith: '. . .the import and emphasis of the Chartrian writings, as of Peter Abelard's is to expand the realm appropriate to reason.' Other writers were making a similar point in their own circles; Hugh of St Victor maintained that the study of the seven liberal arts could restore to the mind divine likeness.[26] This is important, since it demonstrates that the Middle Ages did not have to await the arrival of Aristotle in order to acquire a confidence in human reason (Newell 1983, pp. 119–20). However, it is significant that care was taken to temper such enthusiasm and the Chartrians expressed an awareness of the limits of rationality. Here, William aligned his Christianity perfectly with his Platonism, as he described human reason as a mere reflection of the only real reason, telling us '*simulacrum rationis id est imperfecta ratio*. . .'—imperfect reason is a shadow of [perfect] reason.[27] Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that even a likeness of perfection would have been considered by these writers as a shadow whose capture was beyond value.

To assert such a positive assessment of the human condition was problematic in a Church that had a long history of regarding the authority of scripture and the Fathers as the only sure path to salvation. However, like Adelard, William made clear his low opinion of such scholars who 'come to know that someone seeks after such things they shout that that person is a heretic; these people have more confidence in their monkish cowls than they have in their wisdom.'[28] He asserted that physical laws had precedence over the authority of the Church, and he denounced those he regarded as desiring company in their ignorance as wanting people to believe like peasants and not to seek the reason behind things (Grant 1986, p. 51). This outburst appears to be a direct swipe at an opposition that he regarded as emerging chiefly from the cloisters. It was a current conviction among religious like the Cistercians that the journey to God was one that was intensely interior and realized through meditative contemplation, exemplified by Bernard of Clairvaux's exhortation, 'You must therefore turn your attention inwards' (Ellard 2007, p. 45). This was a conviction that caused them to denigrate intellectual enterprises that set themselves the same purpose. Bernard described philosophers as 'the slaves of curiosity and pride'.[29] Nevertheless, he and his close associate William of St. Thierry had an exalted view of reason of their own. According to them, reason with will and memory formed a trinity which reflected the divine Trinity. Where they differed from the Chartrians was in insisting that *ratio* was not a worthy instrument with which to probe the sacred mysteries that God had seen fit to veil from humanity. It must not be used to undermine Holy Scripture nor to introduce *novitatum vanitates*, new vanities; the scholastic was to remember he was not an *auctor*.[30] For scholars like William of Conches, the acquisition of externally acquired knowledge had a much more important place in their soteriology. Here, however, we must be cautious not to create false dichotomies, as these two approaches to spiritual growth are by no means necessarily antagonistic, nor must we anachronistically cast either side in the mould of fideist or deist. There may indeed be discernible tendencies in this direction, but all were too committed to the rituals and structures of their Church to fit with such definitions. Nevertheless, when strong emphasis was placed on either authority or reason, enormous tensions were capable of being aroused, and in such an atmosphere, the dangers of the latter were easily exaggerated.

## 5. Hildegard von Bingen and the Root of Rationality

Like the Chartrians, Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) was not tied to the *auctores*, although this may have been for reasons beyond her choice. As a woman, she could not gain her education by attending the schools nor by engaging in dialectical discourse with learned peers and masters. However, her fiery visions illuminated her to sudden

realisations in the way that male contemporaries were enlightened by years of patient study. It was Gillian Evans' view that 'the limitations of her academic knowledge are apparent in her writings,' and the sometimes 'uncertain Latin' of her work, the *Scivias*, reflects her lack of serious education (Evans 2002, pp. 107–8). However, this misapprehends the language of Hildegard, which is more correctly identified as being couched in 'fresh and original Latiny' (Dronke 1981, pp. 112–13). It is true that she described herself as '*indocta de philosophis*' (uneducated about philosophers), but here she is only referring to formal training in rhetoric and logic (Mews 1998, p. 52; Ferrante 1997, p. 156). Her writings leave no doubt that she was familiar with sophisticated text which she would have found in the scriptorium of her convent at Rupertsberg. However, Peter Dronke is right that her rich and suggestive language does not reflect the usual study of the ancient '*auctores*', but is shaped instead by the monastic and scholastic environment of the twelfth-century Renaissance. Few of her works draw openly on contemporary scholastic thinkers, but this may have been a deliberate and prudent choice given that they had become the target of Bernard of Clairvaux's considerable ire. We must also think it highly unlikely that she would have been invited so often to preach to learned audiences without a good level of Latin. There was an additional advantage to presenting her theology in visionary and not scholastic form, in that she was never claiming it as her own construction. As a woman, this would have been considered improper, but as a female seer, the 'sybil of the Rhine', she was just another example of God choosing unlikely vessels for the purposes of revelation. As merely a 'feather on the breath of God', it was even possible for her to imply a quasi-scriptural, divinely inspired inerrancy for her works (Newman 1985, p. 164).

*Rationalitas* is personified in her homilies, *Expositiones evangeliorum*, but she departs from the patristic and medieval interpretation of it as meaning a wealth or fulness of reason. Instead, she uses the term as interchangeable with '*ratio*', that is, rationality or reason, and, thus, a virtue rather than an accomplishment (Castricum 2000, p. 1). Accordingly, it is a virtue we are obligated to live in accordance with. It is a divine attribute, a cosmic presence and a stimulus to our actions. In the *Scivias,* Christ is the *radix rationalitas,* the root of rationality.[31] It has been pointed out that we obtain a fuller view of her concept of the rational if we place her in the context of other twelfth-century Platonists, since she shares their belief that a person is moulded into a living expression of the ideals they have learned. 'Created *rationalitas* governing the human being is a microcosmic image of Divine *Rationalitas* ordering the universe' (Castricum 2000, p. 4). Like the authors above, on this subject, Hildegard is cognisant of orthodox teaching, and she is careful to qualify her bold claims with statements that define the boundaries of the potentiality of reason. Regarding illumination, it was the beginning and not the end of the process.[32]

Again, in common with the authors discussed, we find an optimistic anthropology in her discussions of the soul. Here, the *anima* is one with the body; it exists in all its parts as the vivifying principle, meaning that all human action is an expression of the soul. This understanding fed into her conception of nature. Here, she employs the term '*viriditas*' as meaning a 'greenness', with connotations of fecundity, vitality and good health. It is a term that Hildegard is now famous for; though it is not original to her, we find it in Augustine and Gregory the Great. However, it is true that she is keener to employ it than any other theologian. This greening power is a vital spirit that is responsible for the life, growth and movement of all vegetation and animals. According to Hildegard, it is found in all the world's beauty.[33] The setting of her convent in the lush Rhine valley was quite obviously a primary influence on her theological perception. In her early work, the power of *viriditas* seems confined to the natural world; later, it grows into a way of conceiving the human form in that flesh and blood hold a greening quality. In particular, it shines in respect to sex and reproduction, where it is involved in vitality in man and germination in nature. In women, fertility was indicated by the *viriditas* of her blood. Reason, knowledge and, above all, conscience were green (Schipperges 1997, p. 67). Mary was chosen on account of her viridity, as she was the '*viridissima virga*' (the greenest branch) (Newman [1987] 1997, Symphonia 19). In her convent, she urged her nuns to cultivate their own

*viriditas* by imitating the Mother of God so that, just as she had done, they would give birth to the Saviour. Their virgin bodies ought to be unploughed fields so that they might survey 'the viridity and the blossoming of this uncorrupted pasture.'[34] The Saviour himself was *viriditas*, since he entered the world via the tree of Jesse, which is the epitome of the unity of Creator and creation (Ritchey 2009, p. 243). In nature, it is allied with moisture, which, as the 'giver of life', has a theological coherence with the Holy Spirit. Indeed, a passage in the *Scivias* explicitly states that the Holy Spirit is greenness: 'She [blessedness] is also surrounded with many gifts which are green with the greenness of the Holy Spirit.' In another text, the *Book of Divine Works*, the Holy Spirit 'poured out his green freshness of life into the hearts of men and women so that they might bear good fruit' (Bowie and Davies 1990, p. 32; Sci. III 6, 33; LDO X, 2).

We also find in her work a conviction that creation and salvation history are inseparable. The universe, though a unified whole, is rendered out of joint by the Fall. The spiritual objective of humanity is to restore it once more for the purposes of salvation; history is a search for the recovery of Eden's unity. Here, balance and proportion are crucial; it is a spiritual imperative to discover and restore this equilibrium in the microcosm of ourselves so that it may be restored in the macrocosm. This idea is an ideal of *homeostasis* which links pagan and Christian cultures. Pozzi Escot explains that 'For Hildegard especially all must balance, all must be ordered, and all must contemplate a mathematical mean' (Escot 1996, p. 56). This allows her to assign to virtuousness and penitence the effect of greening and regreening as *viriditas* and *revirescere*, in turn redirecting the body to God's service (Ladner 1982, p. 16; LDO I, 4). Music played a highly important role for her in this endeavour, and it was fundamental to humanity's restorative role in the universe. In common with the other writers discussed here, this interpretation is reflective of her high esteem for humanity, which she believed would eventually take up a position before the throne of God once held by fallen angels.[35] In her sermon on the nativity, she painted a picture of the creation of humanity in which a heavenly host praised God on account of the human being 'because the divine works shone out in him'. For Hildegard, the human was greater even than the angels, since 'an angel is only rational in praising, whereas a human being is rational in both praise and action.'[36]

Yet, there is a curious contradiction in Hildegard that means that such positivity often sits incongruously alongside what has been described as her 'Manichaean shadow' (Dronke 1984, pp. 182–83). Barbara Newman has rightly reminded modern admirers of the 'life-affirming visionary' that there is a less appreciated side to her that tended toward renunciation and 'stark moral dualism' (Newman [1987] 1997, p. 257). In the *Scivias*, man is poor, weak and infirm, 'black in the blackness of sins and filthy in the filthiness of the flesh.' Even so, they are surrounded by 'ornaments', martyrs and virgins like precious stones 'so that by them the mire is surpassingly adorned, and the virtues, which so gloriously shine in God, shine in the human body.'[37] Attempting to resolve this contradiction, Constant Mews tells us to regard the life-denying aspects of her worldview alongside her apocalyptic mode of thought (Mews 1996, p. 27). This impulse was characterised not by a millenarian second coming, but by the imminent judgement of tepid religious and secular leaders who had abandoned their duties. It also must be said that, even when we consider this facet of her prophetic message, for the most part there remains in her work a highly positive anthropology from which emerges one of the earliest conceptions of the 'absolute Incarnation', that is, the idea that this event was predestined in eternity. Hildegard wrote, 'When God created the world He wished in His infinite wisdom that He would become human (*homo fieri voluit*)'.[38] This is a daring Christological statement first encountered in the writings of the eleventh-century Benedictine theologian Rupert of Deutz (c.1075–1129). As an idea, it was not without significance, since it was later developed in the thirteenth century by Robert Grosseteste (c.1168–1253) and the Franciscans, including Duns Scotus (c.1265–1308). In this understanding, the Incarnation is predestined since it was always intended as the perfection of creation, even if humanity had not brought on the Fall. Indeed, like the Chartrians, and unlike most of her contemporaries, Hildegard has an interesting

take on the debilitating effects of the Fall. Much like William of Conches, for her, our first parents' punishment is a physical deprivation. William saw the exiled Adam as unbalanced because he lived from the bread of his labours in a hostile environment, while Hildegard says he was deprived of the 'beautiful viridity' which was the gift of God.[39]

In her sermon on the prologue of John, even when she talks about the post-Eden blood of humanity turning to poison, there is a sense that humanity, and in particular the feminine, can bring forth the Logos. In what Dronke described as the highest, as well as the most startling, moment of her optimism, the Logos' relation to humanity is an indwelling like that of Eve to Adam before she came from his rib (Dronke 1992, p. 390). In another sermon on the Prodigal Son, she describes the first transgression as *felix culpa* (happy fault) since, through the Fall as well as the vicissitudes of life, humanity had acquired a knowledge the angels would never possess (Dronke 1992, p. 390). In her discussion of this theme in the second part of the *Scivias*, it is clear that the effects of the Fall are only a distortion of creation's and humanity's intrinsic goodness. Eve, who appears in a shining cloud full of stars, is largely exonerated as the burden of guilt falls on Satan.[40] Elsewhere, when she refers to Redemption, it is affected by love (*in caritas officio*) rather than sacrifice.[41] At other times, it is as if the Incarnation itself was sufficient for the salvation of mankind. She assures us that the Word, having assumed flesh, 'turned all the works of man to better ends, by destroying the futile and conserving the useful. . .' (Flanagan 1998, p. 149. LDO III. 5). In an antiphon (Newman 24), it is the lifegiving Holy Spirit acting like the World Soul that washes all from stain, 'wiping away sin and salving wounds. It is the lambent and laudable life, all rousing and reviving' (Flanagan 1998, p. 105). This aspect of her theology has been termed 'creation spirituality' (Fox 1985). Like William of Conches' 'climate control', the emphasis is no longer on original sin and the need for Redemption, but on the workings of God through creation.

Hildegard differs from the Chartrians in that learning is not central to her soteriological vision. Nor is she, in fact, a true 'mystic', since she does not seek union through contemplation and asceticism. Her union is a *revirescere* which comes through an inpouring of *greenness* in which it is possible to become infused with divine life in just such a way that the *viriditas* of God courses through the veins of nature. Like the Chartrians, she seeks God primarily by engaging in the world around her rather than the *auctores*, and this is made possible by a high estimation of what it is to be human. Her ascent to the divine might be characterised as a balancing affected by a spiritual saturation that restores to the person a *rationalitas*, which in turn will restore the world to its prelapsarian order and harmony.

## 6. Abelard and the 'Captured Stranger'

Peter Abelard (c.1179–1142) was once said to declare that, 'I love profane science for its grace and beauty. . .and of this slave- as captured stranger—I wish to make an Israelite'. He added a statement that must have been shocking indeed to the ears of some twelfth-century churchmen: 'A doctrine is not to be believed because God has said it, but because we are convinced by reason that it is so' (Lloyd 1932, p. 162). Such utterances were clearly designed to provoke so that, at times, he felt obliged to reassure. In a letter to his wife Eloise, he disclaimed the idea that he favoured philosophy over Church teaching: 'I do not wish to be a philosopher if this means that I must reject St Paul. I do not wish to be an Aristotle if this means that I must separate myself from Christ. . .' (Gilson 1960, p. 107).

Abelard does not appear to have shared quite the same degree of optimism as some of his contemporaries with regard to the human possibilities of ascending to God on the path of knowledge of self and of nature. In this respect, he was less of a humanist. Nevertheless, he was categorically a humanist in the empathy he displays for the fallen human, his untiring search for answers and his biting criticism of scholarship that lacked rigour (Sweeny 2016, p. 102). He also had an understanding that original sin did not designate a physical weakness or a moral disease of the mind and will. Grace was to be understood as an assistance rather than an enablement. Indeed, the core of his theology was his unwavering optimism with regard to humanity's relationship with God. Even more

than Hildegard, his soteriology was remarkably free from notions of atonement. Instead, Abelard interpreted the redemption and reconciliation through the blood of Christ not as an expiation, but a kind of teaching. He believed that, through both word and deeds, Christ binds us to himself through a longing (*nos sibi amplius per amorem abstrinxit*) by which true love (*caritas*) would fear nothing for his sake (Abelard 1969, p. 117).

Abelard writes in his autobiography that he was persuaded by his students to provide analogies that were capable of expounding on the Trinity whilst at the same time being congruent with reason (Abelard 1967, p. 83). The opening of his *Theologia 'summi boni'* (*Tsum*) sets out its intent to say something close to human reason in order to answer the dialecticians who found the doctrine of the Trinity absurd'.[42] He considered the best tool available to him for such a purpose to be dialectics, of which he was the supreme master. For conservatives such as Bernard of Clairvaux, dialectics was a human art, and its application to one of the greatest mysteries of faith would have been nothing short of laying profane hands on the sacred. Abelard uses *ratio* to understand that the Father is power, the Son wisdom and the Holy Spirit goodness. Because reason is a faculty common to all people, he is happy to accept the idea that the ancient philosophers had an intimation of the Trinity. In the *TSum* (Bk 1), he gathers witnesses to the Trinity from the Bible, but even more so from the Latins and Greeks. This was anathema for those who held that the profoundest aspects of theology were vouchsafed only to chosen individuals via, and because of, their deep Christian faith. It also means that he is able to discuss the similarities between Plato's World Soul, which animates all beings, and the Holy Spirit. Though a pagan, Plato, who was '*maximus philosophorum*', the greatest philosopher, can, as a rational being, participate in the divine mind so that his discoveries will have coherence with those of the prophets and patriarchs (Abelard 1970, p. 558). The concept of *involucrum*, which considered pagan writing as an 'enfolding' of truth behind a veil of myth or poetry, was important in this respect, since it allowed for truths to be uncovered in even the most fabulous of tales. Abelard explains that '. . .this wrapping is beautiful because God's love, which we call the Holy Spirit, is infused into human hearts by faith, or primarily through the gift of reason.'[43] It is important to note here that Abelard was not a thoroughgoing rationalist; he had faith in revelation, and he asserts forcefully that those logicians who think that God can be known through logic have exceeded the limits of human reason. However, his Trinitarian theology was infused with logical and grammatical appeals to relationships between genus and species, as well as much wrestling with semantics and linguistic analysis. In the *Collationes*, when the Christian tells the Philosopher that there is one raised in natural law who handed down perfect teaching, he replies,

> If only you were able to convince your own people of what you are saying, so that you would show yourselves truly as logicians, armed with the verbal reasoning. . .the highest wisdom, which the Greeks call *logos*. (Abelard 2001, pp. 89–90)

In his *Sic et non* (yes and no), Abelard brings together passages of scripture and authoritative writing that betray differences and contradictions. He then calls the reader to question the texts. During this, he is even prepared to admit that scripture may contain errors, since the prophets or apostles 'did not always remain entirely strangers to error' (Abelard 1976, p. 97).

There was a backlash with Bernard of Clairvaux which was, at its helm, armed with a revitalised notion of the Augustinian concept of '*curiositas*'. When Bernard had set out his twelve degrees of pride, curiosity, 'which allows sight and other senses to stray after things,' was the first on his list (Bernard of Clairvaux 1929, p. 3). In addition, the distinguished German theologian Gerhoch of Reichersberg (1093–1169) violently condemned the '*novitates*' of the masters (Peters 1996, p. 352). Much cited in the texts of condemnations like these was 1 Tim. 6:20: 'guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.' Additionally, the exhortation from Prov. 22:28, 'Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set', was used to castigate innovations in scholarship (Peters 1996, p. 352). However, we must be careful not to take

seriously the caricature of Bernard as a reactionary enemy of learning. He was well versed in the trivium, and he taught his monks that all knowledge in itself was good, though he insisted that it was to be founded on truth, by which he certainly meant scripture, the Fathers and established dogma.[44] He was aware that philosophy might have its uses, such as teaching and refuting heretics; however, reason and dialectic were inappropriate tools for dealing with mysteries of faith. It is difficult not to agree with Roger Llyod's sense that, for Bernard and his sympathisers, philosophy tended to reason, reason tended to heresy and, therefore, philosophy tended to heresy (Lloyd 1932, p. 161). In a letter to Pope Innocent II, he painted a vivid picture of what he considered were the emerging dangers.

> Darkness is being brought into towns and castles in the place of light, and for honey poison or, should I say, poison in honey is being offered on all sides to everyone. . .He [Abelard] insults the Doctors of the Church by holding up the philosophers for exaggerated praises. He prefers their ideas and his own novelties to the doctrines and faith of the Catholic Fathers. . .Catch for us, most loving Father, the foxes that are destroying the vine of the Lord [Song of Songs 2:15], while they are yet young; lest if they should grow and multiply, what was not done for their extermination by yourself, may be the despair of those that come after you. (Bernard of Clairvaux 1953, pp. 318–20, letter 239)

William of St. Thierry was also far from anti-intellectual. He was perfectly capable of exalting reason, so long as it did not demand a sacrilegious level of autonomy. Reason must subject itself to faith if it is to reach its highest attainment in the contemplation of God. In a thinly veiled reference to Abelard, he berates 'the proud and puffed up person' who, upon finding the door of faith, does not enter, choosing instead to dispute with the doorkeeper only to have the door slam on him (William of St. Thierry 1979, no. 9).

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Abelard's detractors did not make much effort to understand what he was trying to say. In this respect, his championing of reason was something of a gift to his enemies, making it easy for them to characterise him as over-asserting human capability. Abelard's conviction that the Holy Spirit's earthly mission might be seen as distributing divine gifts was arrived at by studying the World Soul. It is important to keep in mind that this concept is fundamentally Platonic. It is this that led Abelard to the conclusion that, by contemplating the nature of things, we might grasp these gifts or 'forms' of good (See, Dyer 2014, p. 123). To do so is to confront the source of the 'good' and engage in the second part of the Neoplatonic process of emanation and return. That is, the human soul ascends back to God through the contemplation of forms. Once more, human reason is placed at the heart of the anagogic ascent. This is not the same as saying that unaided thought can unravel divine mysteries; it does, however, claim that thought, aided by grace, may bring us to an encounter with such mysteries. This is a fundamental difference that those who attacked him failed or refused to appreciate.

## 7. Reason as a Path to God

In certain quarters of northern Europe, there was a philosophical awakening in the second half of the eleventh century that bore considerable fruit in the centuries that immediately followed. This was a time which has been characterised as an epoch when 'reason departs from the pre-given tracks set down by patristic authorities in order to discover its own themes and epistemological methods' (Riesenhuber 2000, p. 43). For a large part, this departure was based on a heightened appreciation of what it meant to be human, as well as a positive conception of an ordered nature. This was a paradigmatic shift in self-perception that expressed itself most clearly in a belief that, to understand the microcosmic 'self', it is incumbent upon us to understand the macrocosmic 'self' that is nature. This impulse would have been anathema to the Cistercians, who regarded the former as something that the Christian must strive to transcend and the latter as little more than a book of *exempla* from which it was possible to draw spiritual or moral lessons. The sharpest contrast between these differing approaches may be discerned by comparing the alternative name for Abelard's *Ethics*, that is, *Scito te ipsum*—that most Greek of imperatives—know thyself

(Γνῶθι σαυτόν), with William of St. Thierry's objective in his *Golden Letter* of completely losing self in a union with God. C. Stephen Jaeger has argued that we should scrap the term 'twelfth-century Renaissance' because it is 'obscuring'. Far from this age being characterised by optimism, he paints a picture instead of pessimistic, world-weary scholars who cast a jaundiced eye on the developments of their age. Jaeger reminds us that Thierry of Chartres felt it necessary to banish the rabble from his school (Jaeger 2003, p. 1152, 1170–71). However, actions such as these betrayed an elitism rather than a general negativity. Adelard was scornful of the learning in the French schools. Bernard of Chartres' school sought to refine the few rather than educate the many. William of Conches wrote that he came from a land of 'muttonheads', and Hildegard was highly selective when it came to admittance to her own convent. Perhaps most famously, Abelard was perfectly able to form a low opinion even of the most celebrated scholars of his age. However, having a low opinion of the generality is perfectly compatible with having an exalted opinion of your own capability and the potentiality of those under your charge. The twelfth century was a highly optimistic age; it was just that this optimism was narrowly focused. Its educational programme had more than a similarity to that of Plato, its main concern being the formation of philosopher kings. The conviction that this was entirely achievable was what characterised the positivity of these scholars, and in this way, they might be regarded as daringly innovative.

Stiefel describes a 'radical change' at this time from 'passive awe to active curiosity.' Yet, she bemoans the fact that it has been underestimated in the history of ideas because it was without effect (Stiefel 1977, p. 347). However, the seeds that were cast in the twelfth century did later bear fruit with the likes of Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. It is also not insignificant that in the Renaissance, Nicholas de Cusa (1401–1464) was fond of not only citing Thierry of Chartres, but reproducing his words directly. In the end, if the great constraint on these scholars was their limited resources, their great strength was their audacity to champion human potentiality in a milieu that had, long before, sanctified humility before an unknowable universe. Theirs was not, perhaps, a revolution, but it was certainly the intimation of one. They were voices in the wilderness that prepared the path for the greater things that were to come in the reception of Aristotelian physics, Renaissance humanism and the mathematical universe of Galileo Galilei. Indeed, the primary step in the quest for new learning is the conviction that we are capable of attaining it. The positive anthropology and the high estimation of reason afforded these thinkers, and others like them, the temerity to cast their eyes to heaven not only to seek answers, but to initiate their own perfection in an anagogic ascension. The confident human is exhilarated by their own capabilities; those who are inclined to a more pessimistic view of the human condition are led to conclude that humble wonder is the only way to approach an absolutely transcendent God. The two systems that were contended over in the twelfth century have in common the purpose of ascent; what fundamentally distinguishes them is their basis. One is grounded on cognition, the other on established truths; the tool of the first is *ratio*, the method of the second is abandonment to *amor*. If the new ideas that appeared at this time had little effect, they nevertheless made an important claim that would be returned to in later centuries. The assertation that it was possible to make a noetic journey to God was both profound and important; it was also possibly the most audacious claim for the value of learning that Christianity has ever made. As a schema, its seeming reliance on human endeavour meant that it was going to be deemed far too anthropocentric to be acceptable doctrine in the twelfth century. Furthermore, the Church enjoyed a large amount of possession, control and access to its *auctores*; human *ratio*, on the other hand, was an epistemological entity that was decidedly more difficult to regulate. An *ascensus hominis* that relied on reason and the arts would have to wait a couple more centuries before its renaissance proper.

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## Notes

1 *Dpm*, p. 39.
2 *Quaestiones naturales*, chap. 6. In (Cochrane 1994, p. 43).
3 For a useful survey and discussion of this idea see, (Constable 1996).
4 (Stiefel 1977, pp. 348 and 349–50). This is Stiefel's translation from *Quaestiones Naturales* 1933, p. 20.
5 (Speer 1997, p. 136). In (Speer 1995), he argues that a sybolic understanding of nature gave way at this time to an interest, guided by reason, in obtaining a systematic perception of causes. For Adelard in this text see, pp. 331–56. See also, (Speer 1994).
6 *ONDB*. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/163.
7 (Stiefel 1984, p. 170). She names also, Hugh of St Victor, Thierry of Chartres, Abelard and William of Conches.
8 *Quaestiones naturales*, p. 32.
9 *Tsd* 28.
10 (Southern 1979, p. 41). This is Southern's translation of Vernet (1948), ii, pp. 660–70.
11 *De sex dierum operibus*. (Thierry of Chartres 1971, p. 570).
12 *Glosa super Boethii librum De Trinitate*, II, 3–7.
13 *Abbreviato Monacensis commentum super de Trinitate Boethii*, II, 27–30.
14 *Ænigma fidei*, PL. 180, 414b-c.
15 *De natura et dignitate amoris*, 1; *Epistola de frates de Monte Dei*, PL. 184, 315c.
16 *Exposito ad Romanos*, CCCM, 86: 162.
17 This interpretation is missing from the later *Dragmaticon*, I. 1. 8.
18 *De erroribus*, 89A. 61.
19 *Drag.* p. xvi.
20 *Drag.* VI. 1.1; I. 1.8–11.
21 *Drag.* I. 1. 8.
22 *Dpm*, p. 115–16.
23 *Glosae super Boethium*, Ch. 3.
24 *Drag.* VI. 13. 2–3.
25 *Glosae super Boethium*, 1. 2.2.
26 *Glosae super Platonem*, p. 248.
27 *Didascalicon*, 2.1.
28 *Glosae super Platonem*, p. 114.
29 (Bernard of Clairvaux 1957–1977). *In die Pentecostes*. *Sermo* 3, p. 173.
30 *De erroribus* p. 11–12. See also, (Stover 2013, p. 129).
31 *Sci*. II.V.
32 *Expositiones Evangeliorum* in (Hildegardis of Bingensis 2016, II, pp. 191–92).
33 *LDO* IV, 11.
34 *Sciv.* III. X. Author's translation.
35 *LDO* I, 10.
36 (Atherton 2001, p. 125). The Sermon on the Nativity of the Lord. Homily II.
37 *Sci.* III 1.
38 *Causae et Curae*. Quoted in (Schipperges 1997, p. 17).
39 *LDO* I. 15.
40 *Sci.* I, 2.
41 *LDO* I. 1.
42 *TSum* III. 5.
43 *TSum* I. 6.
44 *Opera*, vol. 2, p. 5.

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