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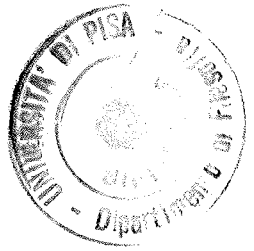

Platonism, scholastic method, and the School of Chartres

BY

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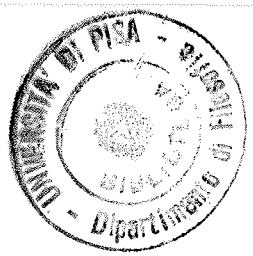


I. THE PROBLEM

Some years ago I wrote a paper on the school of Chartres in which I came to the conclusion – unforeseen when the paper was first conceived – that its importance in the first half of the twelfth century has been very greatly and universally exaggerated by historians during the last hundred years. The paper brought on my head a weight of disapprobation from scholars whom I should have been glad not to have displeased, and their criticisms have left a number of points which need to be cleared up.[1]

These criticisms took two different lines. The first was that my assessment of the evidence was wrong, and that, even if the evidence was not quite as solid as it had been thought to be, it was still sufficient to support without any substantial modification the view that a tradition of scholastic activity of high importance had been maintained in the cathedral school at Chartres until the mid-twelfth century. The second line was that even if the importance of the school *at* Chartres had been greatly exaggerated, there still existed a distinctive tradition of thought, maintained and developed by a succession of scholars, who at one time or another had a close connection with Chartres, sufficient to justify the continued use of the phrase 'the school of Chartres' as the distinguishing mark of this intellectual tradition, without too much regard to the place where the masters and pupils who carried on this tradition actually taught and studied.

With the first of these criticisms, that the traditional picture of the school of Chartres needs no substantial alteration, I have dealt elsewhere, and I shall not say much about it this afternoon. It is with the second and more interesting and important criticism that I am now concerned. Disregarding the nature of the local institution, is the Chartrian designation for a group of scholars, among whom Bernard of Chartres, William of Conches, Gilbert of Poitiers, Adelard of Bath, Thierry of Chartres and Bernard Sylvestris are stars of the first magnitude, still a useful concept? Do these men represent a special tradition of thought, Platonist in inspiration, distinct from that of their contemporaries, and fostered by an internal cohesion, which deserves the special epithet, 'Chartrian'?

[1] My paper appeared in *Medieval Humanism and other Studies*, 1970, 61–85. The most important criticisms are Nikolaus Häring, 'Chartres and Paris Revisited', *Essays in honour of A. C. Pegis*, ed. J. R. O'Donnell, 1974, 268–329, and Peter Dronke, 'New approaches to the School of Chartres', *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 6, 1969 (publ. 1971), 117–40 (see esp. pp. 128–30). For the intermediate position described below, see especially W. Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: the literary influence of the School of Chartres*, 1972.

In principle it may seem a happy solution to adopt this modified concept, for it allows us to accommodate any facts of place and personal contacts whatsoever, and to concentrate on that quality of the spirit, that freely soaring intellectual aspiration, which is symbolized by the name of Chartres and stands for all that is most attractive in twelfth century thought. The proposal seems to allow us to preserve all the fine things that have been said about the school of Chartres in the past, and to free ourselves only from the entanglements of charters and casual biographical evidence, which at best can lead to only hypothetical conclusions. Everyone must feel the attraction of the proposal, which has been well expressed by Professor Wetherbee, one of the most thoughtful and thoroughgoing advocates of this new approach:

> It must be understood (he writes) that the Chartrian label is largely a matter of convenience, and refers to a body of ideas and scholars and poets who developed them, as well as to an institution precisely located in time and space.[2]

It is a tempting solution. But before we fall too readily into an acceptance of its convenience, we must ask precisely what we are doing, and whether what we are doing makes sense, and whether it may not have drawbacks as well as advantages. One cannot help noticing, for one thing, the cautious addition, 'as well as to an institution precisely located in time and space' which must continue to blur the issue. Besides, 'the body of ideas and scholars and poets who developed them' is, and must remain, a rather vague concept, and it is well to ask what, if anything, it means. Nevertheless, despite these drawbacks, the new concept, sanctified by tradition and strengthened by the learning which Professor Wetherbee and other scholars are continuing to pour into it, is likely to have a wide appeal: and my purpose this afternoon is to examine it, and to ask whether it is likely to prove a useful tool for further research, or whether it would be better forgotten except as a milestone in the absorbing history of the revival of medieval studies to which many of us owe our intellectual identity. The problem is not one in which there can be an appeal to clear matters of fact with the expectation that they will provide the answer 'true' or 'false'. It is a problem of arrangement and emphasis, of meaning and plausibility. Nevertheless, we may hope in the end to discover whether the concept helps or hinders our understanding of what was going on in the first half of the twelfth century, or whether we should look for another to take its place.

2 Wetherbee, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

II. TWELFTH CENTURY PLATONISM

With this general programme in mind we may turn to examine the concept of the school of Chartres as it now presents itself, and we may begin with the feature which all exponents of the Chartrian ideal recognise as its central point: its Platonism – 'Chartrian Platonism' as it is often called.[3] What is it? How does it differ from the modified idealism which is everywhere embedded in medieval thought? What, in general, *can* Platonism mean in the schools of the first half of the twelfth century, given the texts at their disposal and their method of using them?

Platonism is an extremely slippery concept which means many different things at different moments in European history. In particular, it means something quite different in the twelfth century from the fourteenth; and what it means in the secular schools of the twelfth century is quite different from what we can find in monastic meditations of the same period. Then again, there is at all times a certain instinctive Platonism, which comes not from reading Plato, but from having a mind which reacts to some great problems in a way similar to Plato's. This similarity of outlook transcends all boundaries, but it was not encouraged by the methods of the schools, whether at Chartres or anywhere else. There is a more instinctive Platonism in St. Anselm, and even in St. Bernard, than in any scholastic products of the twelfth century that are known to me. We have only to look at the kind of arguments which Anselm develops in dealing with theological problems to appreciate this fact. When Anselm, in his *Cur Deus Homo*,[4] says that his rational explanation of a dogmatic certainty seems to him incontrovertible, but that it may be replaced by a better one at some future date, he is taking up an intellectual position very like that of Plato in his account of the constitution of the universe or the immortality of the soul. On both these topics Plato produces explanations for which he claims no more than that they are *likely* accounts of the way in which a principle, which he knows on other grounds to be true, may be articulated in detail. The truth of the general principle, like the truth of the Christian dogma, does not depend on the detailed truth of the explanation,

3 The leading modern exponents of this intellectual tradition are E. Jeauneau, in a long series of important papers now collected in *Lectio Philosophorum: recherches sur l'école de Chartres*, Amsterdam, 1973; the paper most relevant to the present discussion is 'Note sur l'école de Chartres', *Studi medievali*, 3rd. ser., 5, 1964, 821–65; T. Gregory, *Anima Mundi. La filosofia de Guglielmo de Conches e la scuola di Chartres*, 1955; R. Klibansky, 'The School of Chartres', in *Twelfth Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, ed. Marshall Clagett, Gaines Post, and Robert Reynolds 1961, 3–14; Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*, Leiden, 1974; and Fr. N. M. Häring, whose most important publications for our enquiry are mentioned below.

4 See especially *Cur Deus Homo*, I, c. 18: 'Si quid dixero quod maior non confirmet auctoritas, quamvis illud ratione probare videar, non alia certitudine accipiatur, nisi quia interim ita michi videtur, donec deus michi melius aliquo modo revelet.'

though it is illuminated by the explanation. This kind of relationship between explanation and general principle is fundamentally different from the scholastic method of detailed analysis of texts, where the certainty of the conclusion is directly related to the certainty of each step in the argument.

Again, when Anselm says that whoever sins in the smallest way has, so far as in him lies, dishonoured God eternally,[5] he expresses the same attitude as Plato's Socrates when he says that whoever breaks the smallest part of one of the laws of Athens has, so far as in him lies, broken the whole law and constitution of the state. There is no borrowing or overt influence here, only the same habit of thought, which – if we can forget its modern associations – we might call totalitarian.

Again, there is an implied principle in much of Anselm's theology which his pupils compressed into the formula *Deus potuit; Deo decuit; ergo Deus fecit*: that is to say, if we can show that God's nature requires something to have happened, this is a proof that it *has* happened.[6] The principle is one of far-reaching importance, for it permits argument in two directions, from 'fittingness' to fact, or from fact to 'fittingness'. There is a similar principle in Plato's cosmology. Plato argues that the universe is spherical in shape, unique, and endowed with a soul, because these are necessary conditions of its perfection. Thus the *principle* of perfection can be used to establish *facts* about existence, just as Anselm can use the principle of divine perfection to establish the necessity for a Redeemer and the impossibility of there being any method of redemption other than that laid down in Christian doctrine.

Anselm did not argue in this way because he had read Plato, but because he had a Platonic mind. He would have had this whether he taught monks in a cloister or students in a secular school: but in a secular school he would have found it much more difficult to develop his Platonic habit of thought, for the scholastic procedure of building up a body of knowledge from the conflation and criticism of many texts tied expositors to a moderating role from which it was difficult to depart. As a result, few of the arguments of Anselm found much favour in the secular schools of the twelfth century.

[5] See especially *Cur Deus Homo*, I, c. 15: 'Cum (creatura) non vult quod debet, deum quantum in ipsa est inhonorat, quoniam non se sponte subdit illius dispositioni, et universitatis ordinem et pulchritudinem quantum in se est perturbat.'

[6] This principle is implied in the argument of the *Cur Deus Homo*, and more precisely in the *De Conceptu Virginali* (see especially c. 18: 'Quamvis ergo de mundissima virgine filius dei verissime conceptus sit, non tamen hoc ea necessitate factum est, quasi de peccatrice parente iusta proles rationabiliter generari per huius modi propagationem nequiret, sed quia decebat ut illius hominis conceptio de matre purissima fieret.') I have discussed the development of this line of argument among Anselm's pupils in 'St. Anselm and his English pupils.' *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Richard Hunt and Raymond Klibansky, I, i, 1941, 12–13 (see also, 18–19).

I have enlarged on this point in order to emphasize that a natural and original Platonism could exist in a monastic environment with little or no encouragement from the study of Platonic texts. We can see this same phenomenon (though at a lower level of philosophical importance) in St. Bernard. His description of the ascent of the soul from self-love to love of God for the sake of self, to love of God for His own sake, to love of self only for the sake of God, has a distinct similarity to Plato's account of the ascent of the soul from carnal pleasure in physical beauty, to love of physical beauty for its own sake, to love of the ideal beauty which lies beyond all physical objects.[7] It would be absurd to suppose that Bernard was influenced by Plato in sketching this programme: he was simply expressing an idealism inherent in all religious contemplation. Since this was something that Cistercian monasteries existed to promote, it came easily in this environment. It came less easily in the secular schools, because they were not schools of religious life or contemplation, but schools of instruction in basic texts, and in the adaptation of these texts to contemporary needs.

There are, too, other kinds of Platonism which we cannot find in the twelfth century schools – for instance, we cannot find an interest in Plato as the creator of a comprehensive philosophy, or as a guide for the conduct of human life, or as a literary personality. All these interests were widely shared and forcibly expressed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – but not in the twelfth. At first sight, this seems very strange, for the name of Plato never stood higher in scholarly esteem as a symbol of philosophical eminence than in the twelfth century. But the universal esteem and the practical reality are very different things, as a single fact amply demonstrates: the sum total of the works of Plato known even to his most conspicuous admirers in the twelfth century was one half of one dialogue, the *Timaeus*. They knew that several (perhaps many) other dialogues existed; and they lived at a time when a flood of new translations of Greco-Arabic scientific works poured into the West as a result of incessant searching, travelling and translating. These translations radically transformed almost every area of western science, and not least that area in which the *Timaeus* and its derivatives had long been a main source of information. Yet all this effort left Plato's works at the end of the century almost exactly where they were at the beginning, only lower in the scale of their influence.

It would not be true to say that there was *no* interest in translating new works of Plato: the *Phaedo* and *Meno* were in fact translated by Henry

[7] See especially St. Bernard's letter of *c.* 1125 to Guigo, Prior of La Chartreuse (Ep. XI), PL 182, 113–14; *Opera S. Bernardi*, ed. J. Leclercq and H. Rochais, *Epistolae*, I, 1974, pp. 58–9.

Aristippus in southern Italy in about 1155.[8] But note their fate: not a single reader, or a single quotation, or a single surviving manuscript of these translations belonging to the twelfth century has yet (so far as I know) been found. No doubt new discovereies may yet be made; but no new finds can alter the general contrast between the eager search for new works of Plato in the fifteenth century and the almost total lack of interest in the twelfth. The existence of indifference on this scale, contrasting so sharply with the strong surge of interest in translations of other writers, imposes an immediate limitation on the possible meaning of Platonism in the twelfth century.

III. PLATO IN THE SCHOOLS

If we can understand this contrast between enthusiasm for one part of one work of Plato's and indifference to other works of Plato, we shall be nearer to understanding the foundations of knowledge in the twelfth century schools. The books which are read and the books which are unread tell the greater part of the intellectual history of any period, but more especially of a period in which ancient texts were held to be the source of almost all knowledge. This was the state of affairs in the twelfth century schools: all knowledge was a distillation of the doctrines of ancient texts. We may think that this is a very inadequate foundation on which to build a system of knowledge, but it has an epistemology of its own which is not unreasonable. It runs as follows: mankind has been exercising its powers of reason on the same problems for the past four thousand years. These powers of reason have not increased during this long period, perhaps they have diminished; certainly they reached a peak of perfection many centuries ago, both in the intellectual instruments employed and in the stature of the practitioners. What reason has once discovered is forever true, and what has survived the test of time and the criticism of later ages is more likely to be true than anything of more recent discovery. Hence the texts of the past, when compared with diligence and conflated with care, are more likely than any other source of information to provide the modern age with an assured body of knowledge on every subject.

This is the reasoning which lay behind the procedures of the schools. The aim of these procedures was to build up a stable and permanent system of knowledge. For this purpose authoritative texts were needed which could be processed (as we may say) by the techniques developed by

[8] See *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi*, ed. R. Klibansky: 1. *Meno interprete Henrico Aristippi*, ed. V. Kordeuter and C. Labowsky (1940); 2. *Phaedo*, ed. L. Minio – Paluello (1950).

the masters for analysing and co-ordinating statements extracted from many different authors. The most useful statements were those which, however difficult they might be to understand, were yet capable of providing precise answers to detailed questions. The works of Aristotle and Boethius are a vast storehouse of statements of this kind, and it was to this quality that they owed their scholastic success. The Bible and the Fathers would not on their formal merits have qualified for scholastic treatment, for they are very disorganised and often imprecise or contradictory. But they were essential; and it was one of the triumphs of the twelfth century schools that they were subdued and successfully subjected to scholastic procedures, rather as the forests of northern Europe were subdued by the plough.

With Plato it was different. On the Creation he had something to say that could be found nowhere else. On this subject, therefore, he was essential. But apart from his account of the Creation, he was neither essential nor reliable. If he had been essential, the schools would have found ways of subduing him to their method: William of Conches's commentary on the *Timaeus* shows how it could have been done. If he had been clear, precise and reliable, his works would have been as great in the schools as his name; but his many tentative and poetical statements were not designed to produce certainty at any point. It helped him not at all to have been praised by St. Augustine as the pagan philosopher who had come nearest to Christian truth, for when the truth could be found fully in authentic texts, approximations were no longer of any use. Besides, Augustine elsewhere also expressed the hostility and distrust which Plato aroused in those who sought clear and authoritative statements of the truth. The twelfth century schools were engines designed for this single purpose of discovering a clear and unambiguous body of truth that could be handed on from generation to generation. Plato's thoughts were not well adapted to this end.

Even in the small amount of Plato available in the schools there were many signs of unreliability. Almost at the start of the *Timaeus* there was that bit about ideal rulers deceiving the public by pretending to draw lots to decide who was to marry whom; and there was that other bit, even worse, which seemed to recommend promiscuity of sexual intercourse, and required some dextrous misinterpretation to save it from advocating the detestable practices of the Cathars. There was also something about the eternity of matter and the simultaneous creation of all souls when the world began, which could not easily be explained away; not to mention the world-soul, which could not easily be explained at all. If anyone went further and read the new translation of the *Phaedo* he would find still worse things: a proof of the immortality of the soul which entailed a doctrine of the reincarnation of souls, the pre-existence of souls before birth, and the immortality of animal souls. It may have been guessed from these indications of unreliability, reinforced by the absence of Plato's works in

the Arabic tradition, and perhaps from other soundings, that new works of Plato would not serve the ends of the schools. So the first half of the *Timaeus* remained his solitary authentic work admitted into the school curriculum. Whatever Platonism was derived from this one text was not a philosophical Platonism, but a contribution to the vast jig-saw puzzle of universal knowledge about the origin of the world. This essential material, together with a few much quoted commonplaces about justice and philosopher-kings, made up the stock of material for which the schools of the twelfth century were directly indebted to Plato.

By far his most important contribution to the learning of the schools was his account of the primitive organization of the elements of the universe. On this subject he was indispensible because he was unique. There were indeed several summaries of his doctrine in Boethius, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, and Ovid; but anyone who wished to go to the source (and nothing was more characteristic of the twelfth century schools than the search for the origins of doctrines) had to go to the *Timaeus*. Their dependence on the *Timaeus* as the doorway to this whole area of natural science was so great, that it was common in the twelfth century to draw a distinction between Aristotle as the master of the sciences of the mind, and Plato as the master of the sciences of nature. It was through him that the student approached the *arcana naturae*.

Yet, just because Plato was valued as a doorway to knowledge, and not as a personality, philosopher or guide, it was inevitable that he should be left behind when more information from other sources became available in the area of natural science over which he presided. It is the function, as well as the fate, of a door to be left behind. As detailed interest in nature grew, so the speed of the movement away from Plato increased. Interest in astronomy, astrology and medicine – the main off-shoots of cosmology – were among the main driving forces in twelfth century studies. Even now, after many discoveries of the last fifty years, the power of this interest has scarcely been fully realised. The interest grew by leaps and bounds. The body of information grew correspondingly. But it came from the discovery and translation of new texts, which elbowed the *Timaeus* aside and turned Plato's keenest admirers to the study of other sources.

The career of Adelard of Bath provides an early example of the process which drove a student, who had begun with an almost complete dependence on the doctrines of the *Timaeus*, to seek new sources of inspiration.[9] His earliest work *De Eodem et Diverso* was written in the first decade of the twelfth century. In its title and contents, the influence of the *Timaeus*

[9] The fullest and most recent list of Adelard's works is in the article on Adelard by Marshall Clagett, *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 1, 1970, 61–64.

is clearly visible.[10] But even in the title we can see how Platonic words are used in an unplatonic sense. In the *Timaeus* the words *Idem* and *Diversum* are technical terms for constituent parts of the soul, materialised in the contrasting axes and directions of rotation of the fixed stars and planets. But in Adelard's work they stand for the contrasting personifications of *Wisdom* as deployed in the seven liberal arts, and the *World* as displayed in power, glory, dignity, wealth and pleasure. The contrast therefore is between wisdom, which it was the function of the schools to teach, and pleasure, which the world offers to those who follow its allurements. This contrast is not wholly divorced from the Platonic contrast between the eternal unchanging wisdom of the higher heaven and the contaminated changeableness of the lower modes of Being; but it has been translated into a conventional contrast between the schools and the world.

This process of translating Plato into terms of contemporary life comes out again strongly in the central portion of the work. Here Adelard quotes with approval the Platonic contrast between the soul's unchanging knowledge of eternal things and the fluctuating and uncertain opinions which have their origin in the senses: 'That which comes from the senses (Adelard writes) is not knowledge but only opinion: hence my familiar companion Plato calls the senses irrational.'[11] At first sight this seems to express a clear adherence to Plato's philosophy. Yet when we look more closely, the Platonic content is very faint. We must consider the context. Adelard is replying to the argument that the pleasures of the World are real and solid, while the arguments of the philosophers are contradictory and uncertain. To this Adelard replies that the arguments of the philosophers are not contradictory, if they are understood in the sense in which they were intended and interpreted according to the rules of the seven liberal arts. Adelard does not think, as Plato did, that there can be no true knowledge of the physical world; he only thinks that the information of the senses needs to be systematised and refined by the disciplines of the seven liberal arts and the concurrent judgements of successive authorities. Once again, therefore, an apparently full-blooded assertion of the Platonic contrast between the eternal truths of the spirit and the uncertain opinions about everything that is known through the senses, turns out to be no more than the familiar scholastic assertion of the fundamental agree-

[10] The date of the *De Eodem et Diverso* (ed. H. Willner, *Beiträge zur Gesch. des M.A.*, 4, i, 1903) has been much discussed. Haskins, *Studies in Medieval Science*, p. 21, suggests c. 1104–9; Marshall Clagett, *op. cit.* says simply 'before 1116'. In my view Haskins' date is well supported both by the detailed considerations which he mentions, and by the more general consideration that Adelard's *Quaestiones Naturales*, which are certainly later than the *De Eodem et Diverso*, were already known to William of Conches when he wrote the first draft of his *Philosophia Mundi*, probably 1115–20. See (below, p. 17, n. 17).

[11] *De Eodem et Diverso*, p. 12.

ment of apparently contradictory texts when interpreted in the light of the school disciplines. It follows from this doctrine – and this is the point at which Adelard's argument was particularly directed – that Plato and Aristotle did not contradict each other: they provided complementary accounts of the universe starting from opposite poles, which it was the function of the schools to co-ordinate.

This sounds like a familiar ambition – to make Plato and Aristotle agree. No scholarly ambition is more ancient than this. But here again Adelard expresses it in a way which is highly suggestive of the trend in twelfth century science. He was not concerned with the old problem of reconciling the divergent views of Plato and Aristotle on Universals: he was more broadly concerned to reconcile their different approaches to the universe as a whole. Aristotle started from things as they are and as we experience them through the senses; Plato started from the origin of things as we know them from understanding their nature. They meet in the middle. So here already, before any of Aristotle's scientific works was known, we see him emerging as the master of scientific knowledge of the universe of our experience. He was already poised to take over Plato's position in the field of natural science.[12]

Adelard's earliest work is of central importance for understanding the scholastic approach to Plato and the inevitability of the movement away from him. Adelard expressed a typically scholastic, but not a Platonic, attitude towards the uncertainties of sense data: these uncertainties did not arise for him, as they did for Plato, from the diminished reality of the material universe, but from the imperfections of the human organs which (being unable to form a clear impression of the very large or very small) could provide only a distorted image, which needed to be corrected by the seven liberal arts. The uncertainties of the senses could only be corrected by examining and combining the testimony of many authorities working together to penetrate the recesses of nature. To ease the task of digesting the huge body of testimony from the past, it was necessary to divide the field of knowledge into its various branches. Consequently, the whole of the last half of Adelard's treatise is devoted to a sketch of the

[12] Broadly speaking, there were two different ways of describing and explaining the contrast between Aristotle and Plato. The first, which I have already mentioned, described Aristotle as the master of logic and Plato as the master of *philosophia*, which mainly meant the quadrivium. The second described Aristotle as the observer of things as they are, and Plato as the observer of the causes or nature of things. This second line was taken by Adelard in this passage (pp. 11–12); and also by Abelard in his glosses on Porphyry (*Philosophische Schriften*, ed. B. Geyer, p. 24), where he said that Aristotle observed things *in sensibilibus*, and Plato, the *inquisitor physicae*, observed them *in naturali aptitudine* (or, to quote Adelard's words in making the same comparison, *extra sensibilia, scilicet mente divina*). Both Adelard and Abelard found in this contrast the means of reconciling the contrasting views of Plato and Aristotle.

seven liberal arts, which together make up the fundamental programme of the schools.

Already it was impossible for masters to be experts in all the liberal arts, and Adelard advocated a measure of specialization. A master, he wrote, should apply himself only to as many arts as he could manage.[13] Most of the famous masters of whose teaching a record has been preserved attempted to do just this, and their choices were very diverse. No doubt they were guided by tastes, circumstances, and the demands of pupils, which are now hidden from us; but nearly all of them crossed conventional frontiers and specialized in subjects in widely different areas of knowledge. They could do this with success because the method of study was the same in all subjects. Anselm of Laon commented on classical literature and on the Bible; Peter Abelard on logical texts and on the Bible; Thierry of Chartres commented on rhetoric, arithmetic, and Boethius *On the Trinity*. William of Conches on Martianus Capella, Macrobius, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, the *Timaeus*, and Pricisan's *Grammar*; Hugh of St. Victor on almost all the seven liberal arts and on the Bible. Adelard of Bath was quite unusual, perhaps unique in northern Europe, in making the subjects of the *Quadrivium* his single area of specialisation. After the *De Eodem et Diverso*, he wrote *Quaestiones naturales* on medical and physical questions, works on arithmetic and falconry, translations and adaptations of Arabic works on astronomy and astrology, and on the astrolabe and astronomical tables. How far his English background was decisive in giving his work this unusual orientation cannot be discussed here. Whatever the reason, he stands apart from other masters of the period in the area of his specialisation, but at every point he overlapped with other masters, and in his methods and aims he is at one with all of them.

Every step that Adelard took carried him further and further away from the speculative cosmology of his youth, away from Plato, whom in his youth he had called *familiaris meus*. He explored the exact sciences of Euclid and the astronomers, and he helped to introduce the astronomical calculations of the Islamic scholars to the West. The *Timaeus* was the point of departure, but it did not point the way forward. Twelfth century scholars did not often express their feelings about their sources, but one cannot help suspecting that they found the *Timaeus* the most disappointing of the great seminal works of western thought. The more closely it was studied, the clearer it became that everything which they valued had already been extracted from it by the ancient transmitters of its doctrines.

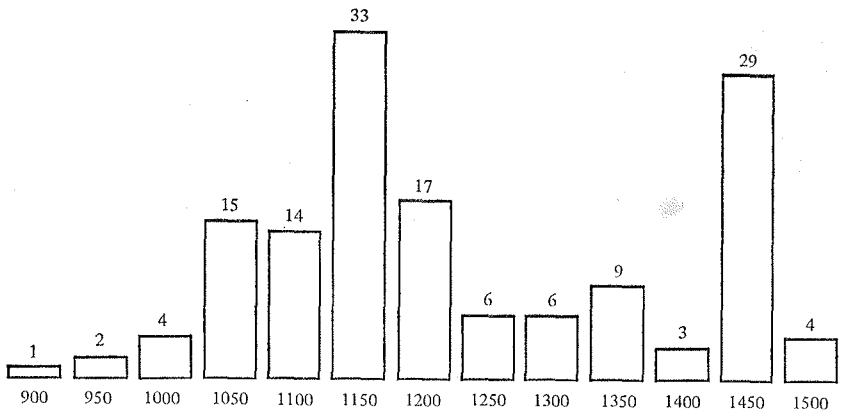
Hence it stimulated, without advancing, the natural sciences of the twelfth century, and so it lost its dominant position, not because scholars

[13] Adelard, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

changed their direction but because they outgrew it as a source for the kind of information which they sought.

The surviving manuscripts provide some statistical evidence of this process. If the surviving manuscripts of the *Timaeus* are arranged on a graph, they present a picture which seems to correspond fairly closely to the rise and fall of its usefulness in the schools, followed by its rise to a new kind of popularity among those who had lost confidence in the procedures of the schools.

Surviving manuscripts of the *Timaeus* over fifty-year periods[14]



This is a crude expression of an intellectual movement, but it shows that the *Timaeus* came into fairly general use, especially in Germany, in the course of the eleventh century; then, with the rise of the French schools, it rose rapidly in diffusion and popularity in the first half of the twelfth century; only to fall away equally rapidly thereafter, until a revolution in thought and feeling brought it to a new height of popularity in the fifteenth century. The falling away after 1150 was not due to any decline in interest in the subjects which the *Timaeus* had opened up. On the contrary, it was the intensification of interest in the natural sciences which consigned the *Timaeus*, its philosophy, its principles, and its limitations to a backwater in the development of science. Nor was the first rise and fall of the *Timaeus* a symptom of the rise and fall of Platonism: it was

[14] This graph is compiled from the list of manuscripts in J. H. Waszink's edition of the Latin *Timaeus* with Calcidius's commentary, in *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi*, vol. 4, 1962, pp. cvii – cxxxi. Manuscripts dated by Waszink 'S.xi ex.' or 'S, xii inc.' are grouped under 1100; 'S. xii' under 1150; 'S. xii ex.' and 'S. xiii inc.' under 1200. The result must be interpreted with caution, but it provides a rough outline of popularity. The decline in the number of MSS after about 1475 may be associated with the beginning of printed editions, and also perhaps with a decline in interest in the *Timaeus* when other dialogues became available.

simply a sign of a growing interest in natural science, which first needed and then outgrew the information in the *Timaeus*. It had made its contribution, and it suffered the fate of a text from which everything of present value had been extracted. Its contribution to knowledge was not the special property of a group of Platonists; it was just one ingredient in the total body of knowledge to be pieced together by masters who saw it as their task, not to understand or transmit the enigmatic philosophy of Plato, but to build up an acceptable body of assured truth from every available source. When the *Timaeus* rose a second time, it did so on the tide of a wider interest in Plato's writings as a whole. When this happened, we can begin to speak of Platonism. However far its adherents were from sharing the assumptions and ideals of Plato, they at least thought that they shared them. They thought too that in sharing them, they had achieved a point of view which distinguished them from their contemporaries and immediate predecessors. The contrast is a measure of the difference between the study of Plato in the twelfth and in the fifteenth century.

IV. CHARTRIAN PLATONISM?

At this point, however, an advocate of the School of Chartres may well raise an objection in some such form as this: 'the attitude toward texts and the accumulation of knowledge, which you have described as the common property of all schools, may indeed represent a general tendency. But it was the special glory of the School of Chartres that it presented an ideal different from this heavy and pedestrian accumulation, and asserted the rights of imagination and poetry arising from a truly Platonic view of knowledge.' This is, in effect, what Professor Wetherbee says: 'Chartrian thought (he writes) begins and ends in a kind of poetry: poetic intuition is finally the only means of linking philosophy and theology, pagan *auctores* and Christian doctrine, *sapientia* and *eloquentia*.'[15] If this claim can be substantiated we will be getting near to a genuine Platonism which may deserve the special epithet 'Chartrian'. Our next step, therefore, must be to test the existence of this poetic Platonism by examining some of the scholars who are habitually associated with Chartres. For this purpose I shall select two scholars with unimpeachable Chartrian credentials as these are generally understood: William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres.

[15] Wetherbee, *op. cit.* p. 4.

William of Conches

I start with William of Conches, who has (probably rightly) been regarded as a pupil of the greatest of the unquestionable masters of the Cathedral School at Chartres, Master Bernard. William's teaching career must have begun by 1115 or earlier, and there are some indications that he had retired from regular teaching by 1139 when John of Salisbury went to him to study grammar.[16] The surviving evidence shows that he was active before 1125 as a lecturer on the four main texts on which early scholastic knowledge of the natural world was based, the *Timaeus*, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Then, probably still before 1125, he lectured on the main text of scholastic grammar, Priscian's *Foundations of Grammar*.[17] His lectures on these texts

[16] The only evidence that William of Conches was a pupil of Bernard of Chartres is John of Salisbury's statement (*Metalogicon*, ed. C. C. J. Webb, pp. 57–8) that William, whom he elsewhere (p. 16–17) calls 'grammaticus post Bernardum opulentissimus', and Richard Bishop both followed the teaching method of Bernard, until the demand of students for quicker results made them give up ('impetu multitudinis imperite victi cesserunt'). There are two problems here: 1. Does this statement imply that William of Conches and Richard Bishop, besides following the method of teaching of which Bernard was the chief exponent in the earlier generation, were his pupils? No clear answer can be given, but the implication that they were pupils seems likely. 2. Does he mean that they gave up teaching altogether on account of the changed demand of the students, or that they merely changed their method of teaching? The natural sense of *cesserunt*, as well as perhaps the natural impulse of teachers out of tune with their time, would be that they went out of business. If so, and if William had given up regular teaching by 1139, his statement (which he made in dedicating his *Dragmaticon* to the Duke of Normandy in 1144–50) that he had taught the subjects comprised in his treatise 'for twenty years and more' would be easier to understand: it is impossible to construct a plausible chronology of William's career on the basis of a twenty-year teaching career beginning in about 1125 and continuing to 1145–50, but a regular teaching career from c. 1115 or a little earlier to c. 1135, would be consistent with all the evidence (See A. Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia, Studi e Testi* 59, 1933, p. 264, for the dedicatory letter of the *Dragmaticon*.)

[17] There is internal evidence for the chronology of William's works, which has been collected by E. Jeauneau, *Glosae super Platonem*, pp. 12–5, though my interpretation of that evidence differs from Jeauneau's in some respects. First of all, William's commentary on Macrobius refers to a *projected* commentary on the *Timeaus*; his commentary on Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* refers to *projected* commentaries on Martianus Capella (now lost) and Macrobius. This gives the chronological sequence: Boethius, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, *Timaeus*. In addition, his commentary on *Timaeus* refers several times to his *Philosophia*; and once (disconcertingly at first sight, but there is an easy explanation) his *Philosophia* refers to his commentary on *Timaeus*. The most likely explanation is that there was an early version of the commentary on *Timaeus*, which is referred to in the *Philosophia*; and just such an early form of the *Timaeus* commentary has been published by T. Schmid, *Classica et Mediaevalia*: *Revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire*, 10, 1949, 220–66. Moreover traces of an early version of the *Philosophia* have been found by B. Lawn, in Bodleian MS. Auct F.3.10: see *I Quesiti Salernitani* (Italian translation of his *Salernitan Questions*), 1969, 237–8. The main evidence for the early date of the version of the *Philosophia* in the Bodleian MS. is on f. 118 (*Phil.* iv, 7; P.L. 172, 88) where, instead of (as in the printed edition) referring the reader to an earlier passage in Bk. 1, the text reads, 'quod alibi deo iuvante sumus ostensurus,' implying that Bk. 1 had not yet been written. The general picture would seem to be that William was lecturing on all these texts, probably on several occasions, over the same period of time, while working on his related *Philosophia*. There is good reason to think that

left a lasting, though largely anonymous, mark in these areas of study. We are concerned here only with the commentary on the *Timaeus* and the treatise in which he summed up his early teaching on the natural world, his *Philosophia Mundi*. The latter is the first general survey of the physical universe in the twelfth century, based on all the evidence that was available in Western Europe in about 1120.[18]

The novelties of the *Philosophia Mundi* are two-fold: the comprehensiveness of its outline, and the use it makes of comparatively new sources of information. Its comprehensiveness is remarkable: it covers the whole of nature, from the Creation of the world and its primitive elements, to a survey of the forms in which these elements were combined, and the manner of their operation in inanimate and living things; and it leads finally to an outline of the physical and mental composition of Man himself. It is a very grand outline of the whole subject; but we must be careful to make the right claims for it. It is not new in its appeal to natural reason for this had been common to all who had studied the texts I have mentioned during the previous two hundred years. Nor, indeed, was it strictly to reason in any modern sense of the word that it appealed; rather, it was an appeal to the authoritative judgements of the past, found in a wide variety of texts. It was the systematic use of a wide variety of authorities that was new, not the appeal to natural reason.

The most important innovation in William's *Philosophia* was his use of medical texts which had recently been translated from Arabic in southern Italy, largely by Constantine the African, who had died in 1087. These works greatly enlarged the study of cosmology and the whole system of nature, because the science of medicine was largely concerned with the study of the elements, their characteristics and combinations, and the relations between the stars and the sub-lunar world. But it is clear that Constantine's works, though relatively recent, had already

the bulk of all this work, as well as the main substance of his commentary on Priscian, which William announced at the end of his *Philosophia* as his main task for the future, belongs to a period before 1125. The commentary on Priscian has survived in two versions, and in both of them he quotes lines of Hildebert, giving him the title 'bishop of Le Mans,' *ille episcopus Cenomanensis*, a position which he ceased to hold in 1125 when he became archbishop of Tours. (See E. Jeauneau, 'Deux rédactions des Gloses de Guillaume de Conches sur Priscien, *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 27, 1960, 212–47). Admittedly, divisions in a teaching career are not to be drawn too sharply, but William's reference to his new field of work is very emphatic, and if this new phase was already in full swing by 1125, we may reasonably think of the decade 1110 to 1120 as the main period of his Platonic – scientific interests. This chronology would fit well with the parallel between William's view on the world-soul in his earliest works and that of Abelard in his *Theologia* of 1118–20, on which see P. Dronke, *Fabula*, (Leiden, 1974), pp. 57–60.

[18] The *Philosophia Mundi* must be read in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 172, 41–102. Another version is printed in vol. 90, 1127–78, among the *spuria* of Bede, but whatever lessons this version may contain are obscured by errors.

aroused much debate and opposition. William tells us that some of his contemporaries refused to read (that is to say, probably, to lecture on or introduce into their lectures) the works of Constantine or other *physici*. It would seem that the point they chiefly objected to was Constantine's account of the elements of the universe as minute invisible particles which are experienced only in combination and never in their pure state. Against this, some of William's contemporaries asserted that the four fundamental elements were directly experienced as fire, water, air and earth; others asserted that the elements were not these *things*, but the qualities of hot, wet, dry and cold, inherent in them. William followed Constantine, but with a refinement: the *elements* are indeed the invisible particles of Constantine's hypothesis; but the *things* we experience as fire, water, air and earth may be given a subordinate name, not 'elements' but *elementata*, 'things made up of elements'.[19]

These divergent views, which have some similarity to contemporary disputes about universals, illustrate the considerable body of discussion on which William could draw, probably already by about 1115. The disputes were not only disagreements within a single discipline, but reflected the merging – or, at times, confrontation – of cosmology and medicine, of cosmology and theology, similar to the contemporary merging of grammar and dialectic, and of dialetic and theology. The debates embraced the whole field of knowledge, and were parts of a single scholastic process. In this context, innovation meant not so much the intrusion of new ideas as the exploitation of new sources, and every conspicuous scholar of the time was in this sense an innovator. Adelard, William of Conches, Abelard, Thierry – they were all responsible for exploiting some new source in attacking familiar problems, and they seem to have been familiar with each other's work. William of Conches owes a debt to Adelard's *Quaestiones Naturales*;[20] there are echoes in Abelard of Adelard's *De Eodem et Diverso* and William of Conches's *Philosophia*; and of the latter at least there are echoes in Thierry. They lived so much in the same world of thought that it is not easy to distinguish a borrowing from an echo, or an echo from a common reverberation. What is most evident is the existence of a common stock of knowledge and scholastic expertise, which already has a long history behind it and had reached a point when it issued naturally in new surveys of large areas of knowledge.

[19] *Philosophia Mundi*, i, 21 (P.L. 172, 49–50). For the use of the word *elementatum* as a substantive in the twelfth century, see Th. Silverstein, *Mediaeval Studies*, 16, 1954, 156–62. In the passage which I have quoted (which is the earliest example of the word known to Silverstein) we seem to be at the beginning of development from adjectival participle to substantive: *Si ergo velimus imponere digna nomina, particulas praedictas dicamus 'elementa', ista quatuor quae videntur 'elementata'*. William uses an almost identical phrase in his Glosses on *Timaeus* (p. 130; and cf. pp. 264, 272).

[20] See Brian Lawn, The *Salernitan Questions*, Oxford, 1963, 51–4.

It is natural that we should think of the first two decades of the twelfth century as the starting point of a new stage in scholastic thought, because it is from these decades that written testimony begins to be abundant. But increasingly we discover – and William's *Philosophia* is only one piece of evidence that points in this direction – that there was an earlier formative period of scholastic development which has left very little trace in written records. On reflection, this is not surprising. In the schools it was the spoken word which was important: perhaps one should even say that it was the physical presence of the master, acting as an intermediary between the authoritative text on which he was lecturing and his pupils, which was important. The written word was only a secondary aid to memory. At first, there were only the most primitive arrangements for reducing the spoken words to writing. Pupils made their own notes as best they could; perhaps they combined to provide a semi-authoritative record of the master's words; perhaps the master himself checked these written words. But nothing, not even his own writings, could replace the authority of his *ipsissima verba*.[21] It is necessary to remember this when when we talk about scholastic origins. The scholastic stream was already running wide and deep, neither new nor localised in any one place, when William of Conches gave the lectures, of which the *Philosophia* is a summary written for the wider world outside the schools.

With this general background in mind, we shall look at two passages in the *Philosophia* and see how William went to work.

1. I select, first, the section on the human brain.[22] Here, as often, Plato provided the starting point. William knew (not directly from Plato himself but from Calcidius's Commentary) that Plato had located the functions of the rational soul in the brain, on the characteristically Platonic ground that the highest functions required the noblest location for their operation. This consideration pointed to the head as the seat of the rational soul. Its elevated position and its spherical shape, copying the spherical shape of the universe, which itself was a copy of the most perfect of all mathematical models, the sphere, made it the soul's appropriate home. William was not uninfluenced by these ideal considerations. They were part of the body of knowledge which his texts had handed on to him. But, in addition,

[21] For a striking expression of the superior authority of the living presence to the written word, see Robert of Melun, *Sententiae*, (ed. R. M. Martin, *Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense*, 21 1947, p. 47): 'ab eisque (magistris) eadem suscepi, que ipsi ante meam cum eis conversationem vel post scriptis signaverunt. Quare ea tanto fidelius tanto verius et colligere et colligare potero, quanto certius res illa cognoscitur que per se videtur quam illa que per imaginem aut figuram aliquam discernitur. Quid enim scriptura aliud est quam quedam imago et obscura figura voluntatis ipsius scriptoris?'

[22] *Philosophia Mundi*, iv, 23–4 (P.L. 172, 94–5).

the new medical works taught him a different, a functional ‚way of looking on the matter. Since the brain had the function of collecting sense-impressions from eyes, ears, nose and mouth, it was an advantage that the brain should be near to these organs. It was also important that impressions should be received by the part of the brain nearest to the main sense-organs: this indicated a receiving cell at the front of the brain. The sense-impressions then needed to be arranged in their appropriate categories: this indicated a middle cell where the rational processes took place. And finally the sense-impressions with the appropriate concepts needed to be stored in the memory: this memory-cell required a third chamber at the rear of the brain. The three-fold division of the brain seems to have been introduced into western physiology by Adelard of Bath and William of Conches, on the basis of what they had learned from their near-contemporaries Constantine the African and Alfanus, archbishop of Salerno.[23] It was still being repeated in the sixteenth century[24]

The functional analysis in William of Conches did not stop here. In addition to the convenience of the three-fold division of the brain, there was also a need for the easy flow of impressions and concepts from one part of the brain to another. This freedom of movement was promoted by its spherical shape, which allowed movement to take place without the impediment of angles or corners. Also, there was a need for what one can call ventilation – the need, that is, for an easy exit for the fumes arising from the heat and moisture of the brain. This need was met by the hairs of the head which acted as solidifiers of the emerging fumes – a function appropriately less necessary in old age. So the whole description looks like an exercise in modern science, and this impression is strengthened when William asks how it is known that the functions of the brain are performed in the way he describes. He answers that all this is known from the effects of wounds, as exemplified by the man who was hit on the back of his head and forgot his own name.

What are we to make of all this? Is this modern science struggling into existence, and freeing itself from the idealism of Plato? Perhaps, in the long run, it is; but immediately it is neither Platonism nor modern science. It is only William struggling, to the best of his ability, to combine the information provided by all his texts, both old and new. The merit of his treatment lay in its comprehensiveness: he omitted nothing that his texts had told him. Even the question 'how do we know this?' and his answer to the question came from his sources. Indeed, this is a rather good example of his pride in conflating many sources. He could have answered the question from his main medical authority, Constantine the African, but he preferred to show off his independent reading by quoting as his authority the third century encyclopaedic writer Solinus, who had himself extracted the story from Pliny.[25] Despite the suggestion of experiment, there is no hint of empirical science in William; nor is there any hint that he recognised the deep contrast in outlook between the idealism of Plato and the functional treatment of the subject by the physicians. William embraced both the old and the new material with equal impartiality. Together they built up the great body of knowledge, which was common to all schools everywhere. Neither the method nor the outlook were a matter for individual choice; they were imposed upon all masters by their common methods of interpretation, analysis and conflation of texts.

2. The same scholastic principles and habits of mind can be observed in William of Conches's treatment of the most intractable problem of the *Timaeus* – the problem of the nature of the World-Soul. For Plato, it was just as necessary for the universe to have a rational and immortal soul as it was for the individual human being, and for the same reason: the universe and the individual had to be as perfect as possible within the limitations of their natures. That meant that they must both have their appropriate perfection of shape and movement, and, above all, a rational and immortal soul. It was this last requirement that raised the greatest difficulty for a Christian interpreter, and especially a commentator restricted by the methods, assumptions, and theological orthodoxy of the twelfth century schools. To mention only one difficulty: in the Christian universe the only *created* beings with rational and immortal souls were angels, devils (fallen angels) and human beings. The world-soul was clearly not demonic or human. Could it then be angelic? Scarcely. It was just possible that angels might inform and guide individual stars or planets, for in this service they performed their function of mediating spiritual influence to the lower world, and when the universe ceased to be they could continue their work of adoration and service in other ways. But an angelic world-soul would raise insuperable, and quite unnecessary, problems in the scheme of Redemption and Incarnation, and it would seem to require (as Plato himself thought) an eternal universe. So this would not do. Consequently – unless the world-soul were to be rejected as nonsense, a solution which (however desirable in itself) all the assumptions

[23] In Constantine's *Pantechni* (Basel 1539), which is the work generally referred to by William, the brain is described as having only two cells; but in the contemporary translation of Nemesius of Emesa, *De Natura Hominis*, by Alfanus, archbishop of Salerno (1058–85), caps xi–xii (ed. C. Burkhard, 1917) there is a division into three cells, as there is also in Adelard, *Quaestiones Naturales*, c. xviii (pp. 22–3).

[24] For example, see F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966, fig. 9, from J. Rombach, *Congestorium artificis ac memoriae*, 1520.

[25] Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, ed. Th. Mommsen, 1895, p. 28; the source for Solinus was Pliny, *Natural History*, vii, 24.

of the schools resisted – the world-soul had either to be something more than angelic or less than a soul: it had either to be elevated to God, or depressed to a mere general vitality in the universe.

These were painful alternatives, and it is not surprising that interpreters of the *Timaeus* were divided in the line they took. If the world-soul was 'deified', it exacerbated the unacceptable tendency of the *Timaeus* to confuse the Creator and the Creation. On the other hand, if the world-soul was no more than a natural vigour in the universe, then it was deprived of that independent existence and rationality, which were the essential marks of the soul. This could not be what Plato intended. It seemed therefore that the interpreter had to sacrifice either his author or his orthodoxy, and it was the supreme aim of scholastic interpretation to safeguard both.

William of Conches fully shared this aim. At every point, even at the cost of violence to the words of the text, he tried to put forward interpretations which were both theologically and scientifically acceptable and true to what he conceived to be the possible intentions of Plato. Nothing gave him so much trouble as the world-soul. Nearly all his famous references to the need to penetrate the 'covering of words', the *integumentum verborum*, in order to get to the underlying meaning of the author, refer to the problem of the world-soul.[26] Again and again he has to explain that the words do not quite mean what they say, but that their under-surface meaning is sound. The *integumentum* needs interpretation in order to discover the *sententia*. God did not mix the soul-stuff in a bowl; He did not cut the soul-stuff into different lengths: these are pictorial images of a spiritual process. Such explanations do not tell us much that we could not have guessed, but the special need for them is a sign that William had to tread carefully in this subject. He tackled the problem on at least five different occasions between 1115 and 1145, and on each occasion he slightly – and finally greatly – modified his view.

In what was probably the earliest of these efforts, in his commentary on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and in the earliest version of his commentary on the *Timaeus*, he attempted to combine both the alternatives which I have outlined above: the world-soul (he explained) is the natural vigour in things by which they move, grow, feel and perceive, according to their several natures; and (he adds) 'it seems to me that this

[26] Of the ten references to *integumentum* in the Glosses on Plato, seven (pp. 150, 153, 156, 158, 167, 181, 209) refer to the world-soul. The preferred method of solving difficulties was linguistic analysis, even when the result was unconvincing. Thus William disposed of the dangerous and offensive doctrine of community of wives by a feeble and clearly mistaken verbal distinction (*Glosae super Platonem*, p. 78), which became widely current through incorporation in Gratian's *Decretum*. For this see S. Kuttner, 'Gratian and Plato', *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: essays presented to C. R. Cheney*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke and others, 1976, pp. 93–118.

natural vigour is the Holy Spirit, which is a benign and divine concord'. These words are repeated with little alteration, apart from a weakening of his personal commitment, in the text which seems to give us an early form of William's lectures on the *Timaeus*.[27] In these formulas we see the confident optimism of youth before the difficulties have become apparent. In his commentary on Macrobius, which is probably only slightly later, he had already learnt caution in speaking of the Holy Spirit: 'The world-soul, according to some, is the Holy Spirit, which moves and gives life to all things on earth . . . but it is heretical to say that the Holy Spirit is "created", unless perchance the word "created" here means "sent".'[28] Somewhat later again the revised form of the commentary on the *Timaeus* continues this same cautious qualification: 'The world-soul is a certain spirit inherent in things, which gives them life and motion. It is present wholly and completely in all things, but it is not equally operative in all things, but only, as Virgil says, "in so far as harmful bodies do not hinder". Some say that this spirit is the Holy Spirit, which we now neither deny or affirm.'[29]

Up to this point, William has been trying to hold together the two main interpretations of the world-soul, but a new stage is reached in the latest version of his *Philosophia Mundi*. Here he gives up the attempt to hold everything together: 'According to some, the world-soul is the Holy Spirit; according to others, it is a natural vigour; according to others it is a certain incorporeal substance, which is in its totality in every individual body, though, because of the sluggishness of some bodies, it does not exert the same influence in all of them . . . If anyone wishes to seek an exposition of this, he will find it in our *glossulae* on Plato.'[30] This process of disintegration was taken a stage further in the remodelled form of the *Philosophia*, the work of a compiler who may have been aware of William's changing views – who may indeed have been William himself conflating

[27] The text of William's commentary on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (C. Jourdain, *Notices et Extraits*, 20, ii, 1862, p. 75) runs as follows: 'Anima mundi est naturalis vigor quo habent quaedam res tantum moveri, quaedam crescere, quaedam sentire, quaedam discernere. Sed qui(d) sit ille vigor queritur? Sed, ut mihi videtur, ille vigor naturalis est Spiritus Sanctus, id est, divina et benigna concordia, quae est id a quo omnia habent esse, moveri, crescere, sentire, vivere, discernere.' The early form of William's commentary on *Timaeus* (ed. T. Schmid, loc. cit., p. 239) gives a virtually identical text, except that the bold 'ut mihi videtur' has been replaced by a non-committal 'dicitur quod.'

[28] Quoted by Jeauneau, *Glosae super Platonem*, p. 145 n.

[29] Ibid., pp. 144–5.

[30] P.L. 172, 46–7. Fr. Jeauneau inclines to the view that the reference to the *glossulae* on Plato refers to a work not yet written. But in the context of the passage as a whole, and having regard to the development of William's thinking about the world-soul, this seems highly unlikely. As we have seen, there is evidence that both the commentary on *Timaeus* and the *Philosophia* underwent a process of continuing revision over a period of several years.

his own works with the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of St.Victor and the *Theologia* of Abelard.[31] This compilation gives one of the most interesting of all twelfth century surveys of the theories of the world-soul, for it distinguishes their chronology and philosophical acceptability. First, there is the theory that the world-soul is just a metaphor for the organization of the universe; this is unacceptable to experts (*sapientes*). Then there is the view that it expresses the concentration of influences in the sun at the centre of the celestial heavens; 'this view is found in the ancient glosses on Plato and Boethius'. Then there is the view that the world-soul is the Holy Spirit; this is unsound because the world-soul is not a First Cause. Then there is the view that the world-soul is the vitality in all things; 'this is acceptable to almost everyone and fits with everything that Plato said about it'. Finally there is a new view, superior to all the others, which sees the world-soul as Fate or destiny or divine providence. If the compiler of this composite work was William of Conches himself, he had at last found a way of reconciling the world-soul with Christianity, as a metaphor for divine providence. But in his final rewriting of his *Philosophia* as a dialogue with the Duke of Normandy, the *Dragmaticon* of 1144–9, he cut out all reference to the world-soul and ascribed to Nature that *vis quaedam rebus insita*, which thirty years earlier he had confidently equated with the world-soul.[32]

In this long chain of interpretations we see the central puzzle of the *Timaeus* gradually dissolving into thin air. In all these shifts, there is no sign of a consistent philosophy; there is only the aim of making the best of an intractable text of high authority, with grand but awkward ideas. We see the perplexities of a scholar, who was committed – like all his scholastic contemporaries – to the task of giving his text so far as possible a meaning consistent with Christian doctrine, with natural science, and with the intention of the author. Like his contemporaries and successors, he was forced to make increasingly refined distinctions, not because his outlook changed, but because he became increasingly aware of difficulties and contradictions underlying simple solutions. William did the best he could within the school tradition. He would go to the very limit of casuistry in shaping the doctrines of his author to make them acceptable. Essentially he believed that what the ancient philosophers intended was consistent

[31] *Un brano inedito della Philosophia de Guglielmo di Conches*, ed. C. Ottaviano, 1935, p. 46–8. The reason for thinking that the compiler may be William of Conches is that, immediately after the passage which I have summarised, he quotes his glosses on the *Consolation of Philosophy* as 'in nostris glosis super Boethium' (ibid. p. 48).

[32] *Dragmaticon*, p. 31: 'Natura est vis quaedam rebus insita, similia de similibus operans. Opus igitur naturae est quod homines nascuntur ex hominibus, asini de asinis, et similia'.

with truth and Christian orthodoxy if interpreted aright: and it was his task as an interpreter to bring out this truth. Adelard of Bath had expressed the same belief: 'If the *sententiae* of the philosophers are understood in the sense in which they were intended, they will easily be freed from contradiction'[33] – from contradiction, that is, both among themselves and with the truth. So William of Conches: 'If anyone considers not only Plato's words, but his meaning, he will find not heresy, but the most profound truth hidden under the covering of words. It is this that we, who love Plato, will make clear.'[34] These are fine words – one of the finest expressions of the confidence of the early masters in their chosen authors. The 'covering of words' might be opaque in some places, but when subjected to the analytical and interpretative techniques of the schools, the underlying truth, which was always the same and always consistent in itself and with orthodoxy, could be made plain.

Admittedly this desirable aim could not always be achieved, whether through the inexpert handling of the interpreter or the occasional lapses of the author; but the expectation that it could generally be achieved was one of the foundations of the whole scholastic method. The other foundation was that, in the end, orthodoxy must prevail. This was not in doubt, and William of Conches was ready to abandon Plato if necessary: *if* Plato meant to say that all human souls were created together with the universe, then William must say 'I am a Christian and not a member of Plato's Academy, and I believe with Augustine that new souls are daily created.' Plato, after all, could make mistakes: 'Is it surprising that he, the Academician, should sometimes speak like an Academician? If he had always spoken well, he would not have been an Academician.'[35] With all his love for Plato, William of Conches was not a Platonist: he loved the facts about the universe with which the *Timaeus* supplemented the truths of Revelation; but having extracted these facts and filed them down to fit the pattern of Revelation, he had done all that was possible. He then moved on to codify the truths about Grammar which were to be found in the great text-book of Priscian. This was his métier as a master: to extract honey from many sources for others to use.

Thierry of Chartres

I pass now to our second examinee, Thierry of Chartres. I do so with diffidence. First, because it is very difficult to get coherent a picture of Thierry's mind; and secondly, because some very distinguished scholars

[33] *De Eodem et Diverso*, p. 11.

[34] *Glosae super Platonem*, p. 211.

[35] *Dragmaticon*, p. 306 (quoted by Jeauneau, *Glosae super Platonem*, pp. 210–11 nn.).

will dissent from what I shall say. So let me prepare the ground by mentioning a mundane aspect of our problem, and remarking that Thierry starts with a misleading advantage in being called *Carnotensis*, 'of Chartres'. I do not think that he was commonly given this epithet until Clerval made it popular, and he is not known to have been so called during the main period of his career as a teacher from about 1115 to 1142, when (so far as we know anything about him) we know him as a Breton master teaching in Paris. It is only after 1142, when he became chancellor and archdeacon of Chartres that he was sometimes called *Carnotensis*; otherwise he is called only 'Master Thierry' or 'Thierry the Breton'. It is as Master Thierry, with or without the addition *Brito*, that he was known in the schools and to his contemporaries.

With this preface, let us turn to consider his works. The largest in bulk, and probably the earliest in time, consists of his commentary on Cicero's *De Inventione* and the anonymous *Ad Herennium*; that is to say, on the two main texts for the study of rhetoric.[36] Naturally enough, these lectures tell us little or nothing about his philosophical or theological attitudes, but they leave a strong impression of his personality. He shows himself with great clarity as a man with the qualities of an impressive teacher: sardonic, careless of popularity, ironically self-depreciating, and with a keen eye for sharp definitions and lapidary phrases.

In addition to this record of his lectures on rhetoric, we have his *Heptateuchon*, the most justly famous of all the records of his scholarly life.[37] Then we have a treatise on the Creation which has been generally ascribed to him. It is on this that his main claim to fame as a cosmologist and student of the *Timaeus* must rest.[38] Finally, there are three separate

[36] Parts of the lectures on *De Inventione* are printed in W. H. D. Suringer, *Historia critica scholiastiarum latinorum*, 1, 1834, 213–53, and K. M. Fredborg, *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen Age Grec et Latin* (Copenhagen), 7, 1971, 223–60. See also M. Dickey, 'Some Commentaries on the *De Inventione* and *Ad Herennium*,' *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, 6, 1968, 1–41. Fr. Haring (*Med. Studies*, 26, 1964, 271–80) places these lectures late in Thierry's career, but R. W. Hunt (*Studia mediaevalia in honorem R. M. Martin*, 1949, 85–112) has argued convincingly for an early date. This early date is confirmed by the discovery that the commentary by Petrus Helias, which borrows largely from the work of Thierry, is dateable to 1130–39 (Fredborg, *Cahiers*, 13, 1974, p. 34).

[37] The *Heptateuchon* consisted of two volumes of basic texts which are now preserved only in microfilm, since the tragic destruction of the Chartres manuscripts in 1944. The contents are described in A. Clerval, *Les écoles de Chartres au Moyen Age*, 1895, 222–3, and the preface, together with some corrections of Clerval's account, is pr. by E. Jeauneau, *Med. Studies*, 16, 1954, 171–5.

[38] The full text of this work is pr. by N. M. Häring, *Archives d'hist. doctrinale et litteraire du moyen age*, 22 1955, 137–216. The parts which Fr. Häring ascribes respectively to Thierry and Clarembald are pr. separately by him in *Commentaries on Boethius De Trinitate by Thierry of Chartres and his School*, Pontifical Institute, Toronto, *Texts and Studies*, 20, 1971, 555–575, and in *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras*, 1965, 226–49.

records of lectures on Boethius's *De Trinitate* which certainly go back to Thierry in some shape or form.[39] These lectures contain ideas of great interest, but the treatise on the Creation especially has been the subject of glowing eulogies, scarcely varying in substance from time of its discovery in 1890 until the present day. The substance of these praises needs to be looked at with some care, because they have set the tone for much of what is expected of the school of Chartres. I shall quote the words of Professor Klibansky on this point, not because what he says is different, but because he sums up the general opinion in memorable phrases:

> Naive as his account (of the Creation) may now seem to the modern scholar and scientist, this first systematic attempt to withdraw cosmology from the realm of the miraculous, and win for physical theory a relative independence from theology, gives Thierry an outstanding place among philosophers.[40]

Mr Dronke in his turn has adopted these words as a text which he proceeded to confirm and elaborate;[41] and finally, Professor Wetherbee has generalized the theme:

> The great originality of the Chartrians consisted in their emphasis on the rational and scientific as against traditional authority.[42]

So here we have the Chartrian theme put in a new and brilliant light as a model of scientific thought, which is rational, original, and relatively independent of authority and theology. Professor Klibansky gives further coherence to this theme by still continuing to emphasise the physical presence of the school at Chartres:

> Under him (Thierry), Chartres became the centre of the liberal arts to which students came from all over Europe. In search of new knowledge his pupils crossed the Pyrenees and the Alps. They brought back new material and astronomical works in translation from Arabic, and new texts of Aristotle in versions made from the Greek. From Chartres this new learning was handed on to the Latin world.[43]

Here, then, the full doctrine of Chartres as a physical as well as an intellectual entity is still alive. Indeed, the two sides of the doctrine can

[39] N. M. Häring, *Commentaries on Boethius* (as above): pp. 55–116 ('*Commentum*'), 125–229 ('*Lectiones*'), 259–300 ('*Glosa*').

[40] *Twelfth Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, ed. Marshall Clagett and others, 1961, p. 8.

[41] 'New Approaches to the School of Chartres', p. 133.

[42] Wetherbee, *op. cit.* p. 4, and 18–22.

[43] *Twelfth Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, p. 9.

scarcely be separated if either is to make sense. But I must leave aside the physical issue, and turn to the judgements of value which we have just read; and here I must take my life in my hands and say simply that they can't be right; and that for several reasons.

Thierry's cosmology, it is said, is the first systematic attempt to withdraw the subject from the miraculous. If Thierry did this, he was certainly not the first, for the works of William of Conches and Adelard of Bath, which were written perhaps twenty years earlier, were equally uninfluenced by the miraculous. No doubt the act of Creation itself is miraculous, as having no antecedent cause except the will of God. But after this point all the scholars who had glossed the texts from which the West drew its cosmology since the ninth century, had been equally indifferent to miraculous explanations, not because they were indifferent to miracles, but because the texts which they were glossing were secular and rational in substance and method. Indeed, the great achievement of Thierry, if he wrote the treatise on the Creation which we possess, was precisely the opposite one of combining the evidence of Revelation and the secular texts. Far from standing for the relative independence of science from theology, the purpose of this treatise was to bring them together. This was a characteristic activity of the twelfth century schools. To the extent that Thierry was the author of this treatise, he was doing what was being done in schools everywhere; and it is surely no diminution of his importance to see him taking part in one of the greatest enterprises of the twelfth century.

Any generalisation which sets Thierry, or any other 'Chartrian' master, against the common programme of their time, breaks down as soon as we look at it, in principle and in detail. It breaks down in principle because, as we have already noticed, rational and scientific inquiries cannot be thought of as opposed to authority, because the combination of authorities, within the limits imposed by the doctrines of revealed truth, was the method of science and reason. And it breaks down in detail when we look at the texts. The method they display is the only method of the schools; and it is the method followed by every master without exception.

If this is true, how can scholars certainly more learned than I am have come to conclusions which seem so clearly at variance with these facts?

I think the main reason is that they have been dazzled by the great name of Chartres, which required that the works associated with it should be more than just remarkable examples of a common tradition; they were required to have a special kind of distinction different from all others. This distinction seemed more plausible at the time when the idea of the school of Chartres was first formulated, because the scholastic method was then associated predominantly with theology, and it was easy to think that the masters of ancient literature and the Arts were more 'humane' than the theologians. It was not realised (or if realised, it was ignored)

that they all used the same methods, they all drew their ideas from ancient texts, and often from the same ancient texts, which kept reappearing in all areas of study.

This great common background of textual study does not imply that there were not – as there are in all academic societies – groups of masters with different interests within the general stream of teaching. But these differences are extremely complex and individual. Masters with similar interests tended to congregate in the same place, though Chartres is not one of the places noticed by any contemporary as a place where they congregated; but all these groups shared the same method, and their most violent differences arose from their giving different solutions to a common stock of problems. The groups of pupils, who associated themselves with the solutions of their masters, are often distinguished by the nicknames of their masters, like the *Porretani*, or by the names of the areas where they taught, like *Parvipontani*, the adherents of Adam of Petit Pont. Such names were badges of loyalty to a common master, and they sometimes led to ferocious disputes. But the differences had their origin in common sources and common assumptions about the way these sources were to be used. That is why, on points which scarcely seemed to deserve it, they were so ferocious.

These are the general points that can be urged against the opinions I have quoted. We must now see if they can be given a particular application in the case of Thierry. But before going further it will be well to clear up the extent and consequences of the doubt which I have expressed about Thierry's authorship of the works on which his reputation mainly rests. I may say at once that these doubts, if they are justified, will not lessen his reputation; rather, they will perhaps enhance it, by removing his responsibility for some confusions and feeblenesses in these works. But they will have an importance in placing these works in a somewhat different context than that which is normally taken for granted.

We may begin with the commentaries on Boethius's *De Trinitate*. These have come down to us in three distinct forms, which contain numerous passages which are similar in thought and words. It seems a reasonable inference that these passages at least come from a single master, and like everyone else, I believe that this master was Thierry. Whether any one of the three forms in which the commentary has come down to us represents Thierry's own formulation of his teaching is another matter, and it is in the highest degree unlikely that he was responsible for all of them. There is no form of literature more open to additions, subtractions, reformulations and re-castings than glosses on the texts which formed part of the common stock of the schools. Lecture-notes invite alteration by master, audience, and readers alike; and all the forms of the commentaries on the *De Trinitate* which have been associated with Thierry show traces of interventions by other hands. They contain contradictions, confusions

and feebleness which preclude the idea that the three differing versions represent a steadily developing body of teaching recorded at first hand by the master at different stages in his career. With one exception, all of them are anonymous; and the exception gives an attribution not to Thierry himself, but to a certain French master, Helyas, who can scarcely be other than the Petrus Helyas who is known to have been a pupil of Thierry in Paris.[44] We know that Petrus Helyas also adapted the lectures of Thierry on Cicero's *De Inventione* and William of Conches on Priscian.[45] So the ascription makes it seem quite likely that he treated Thierry's lectures on the *De Trinitate* in the same way: he took the substance of his master's lectures, revised them, and added to them without acknowledgement.

Such wholesale borrowings and reconstructions of a master's work are entirely in keeping with the scholastic habits of the period. The masters and their groups of pupils may be looked on as cells organised for the transmission of a growing body of knowledge, coming down from a distant past, and destined for a future which might not, after all, prove to be very long. This does not mean that we may not detect distinctive ideas which can be attributed to individual masters; but in attempting to isolate a master's own contribution, we are doing something which contemporaries were only intermittently interested in attempting. Unless we have very explicit assurances, such as Thierry's lectures on rhetoric contain, it is not generally very profitable to attempt to get back to an original form of a commentary which may have passed through several hands before reaching us.

To take a comparable case, the failure of all attempts to get back to the original form of the numerous collections of *sententiae* attributed to, or connected with, Anselm of Laon is a warning against expecting a too sharply defined body of teaching which can be attributed indisputably to a single identifiable master. The material associated with Anselm of Laon has another lesson which is applicable to Thierry. Careful examination has isolated a substantial number of passages which very probably represent the teaching of Anselm of Laon;[46] and this suggests the method and measure of the success which may be expected in the case of Thierry.

Since the original form of Thierry's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate* is veiled in anonymity we cannot hope for complete success in tracing his original words. We owe it to a single pupil, Clarembald of Arras, that we can trace them at all. The evidence of Clarembald is of two

44 See R. B. C. Huygens, 'Guillaume de Tyr étudiant', *Latomus*, 21, 1962, 822.

45 K. M. Fredborg, 'The dependence of Petrus Helias' Summa super Priscianum on William of Conches' Glose super Priscianum', *Cahiers* (Copenhagen), 11, 1973, 1–57; and 'Petrus Helias on Rhetoric', *Cahiers* 13, 1974, 31–41.

46 The results of this enquiry can be best studied in O. Lottin, *Psychologie et Morale aux XII^e et XIII^e Siècles*, 5, 1959.

kinds. Firstly, in about 1155, he wrote a commentary on the *De Trinitate* which, he tells us, was based on the lectures of his two masters Hugh of St. Victor and Thierry the Breton.[47] In this work he mentions his two masters several times as jointly responsible for some passage in his commentary; but only twice does he mention them separately – once when he attributed a relatively unimportant point to Hugh of St. Victor, and once in attributing an equally unimportant point to one of his masters, without saying which.[48] The impression he conveys is that there was no marked difference between their doctrines. This is understandable: scholars who comment on the same text will necessarily say many of the same things; and a disciple may well follow one of them in greater detail on one point and the other elsewhere.

Clarembald's evidence in this work is important for the insight it gives us into the academic environment in which Thierry worked; but it does not help us to distinguish Thierry's thought from that of Hugh of St. Victor. For this task we must turn to another work of Clarembald. At about the same time as he was writing his commentary on the *De Trinitate*, he also wrote a letter to a great lady, who was probably the former Empress Matilda, in which he says that he has sent her a copy of a *libellus* by Thierry *De Sex Dierum Operibus*, 'which showed how the primal Form operating on matter produced all things according to the principles of physics alone'.[49] To this work, Clarembald adds, he has appended a little work of his own, collected from Thierry's teaching,[50] in which he has attempted 'to show how the various opinions of the philosophers are compatible with the truths of Christianity.' In this way he hoped 'to use the words of the enemies of Christianity to provide strength and support for the teaching of Holy Scripture.' This letter is followed by a rather disjointed and fragmentary series of expositions of the process of Creation, based largely on the *Timaeus* and its associated texts, making use of William of Conches's *Philosophia*, and interspersed with references to the first chapter of Genesis at suitable points.

47 *Life and Works of Clarembaldus*, p. 64.

48 He quotes the teaching of his two masters without distinguishing between them on pp. 69, 88, 95, 97, 129, 198, 221; of a single master without naming him on p. 117; and of Hugh of St. Victor alone on p. 150.

49 'Direxi itaque vestrae sublimitati libellum quem magister Theodoricus, meus doctor, *De sex dierum Operibus* edidit, quem Roma iam suis commisit archivis. In quo quantum philosophiae contineatur liquido apparet cum ipse, utpote totius Europae philosophorum praecipuus, qualiter exemplaris forma in materia operans cuncta produxerit, iuxta phisicas tantum rationes edoceat.' (*Life and Works of Clarembald*, pp. 225–6).

50 'Cui operi (i.e. to Thierry's *libellus*) tractatulum quendam supposui quem ab ipsius lectione ita collegi tanquam si, inpotens falce metere, decidentes a falce robusti messoris spicas collegissem.' (Ibid. p. 226). The full text of this work may best be studied in Fr. Häring's edition, *AHDLMA*, 22, 1955, pp. 137–226 (see above n. 38).

This is the central document for Thierry's thought. But how far is it Thierry's? It has seldom been doubted that what we have is the *libellus* of Thierry himself. But Father Haring has pointed out that the second part of this series of fragments cannot be by Thierry; it must therefore represent the additions which Clarembald promised in his letter. Father Haring, however, accepts that the first part is a fragment of Thierry's treatise. The only contribution I would make is to suggest that the *whole* of what has been preserved consists of Clarembald's recasting of Thierry's treatise with the aid of his lectures, and with the addition of Christian and pagan texts which he claims as his only addition to the work of his master. There are several reasons for making this suggestion. In the first place, Clarembald's description of Thierry's *libellus* as an account of the six days of creation *iuxta physicas tantum rationes* would lead one to expect a systematic and well-ordered treatise. But, in fact, the part which Father Haring and others allot to Thierry is a somewhat confused and repetitive commentary on *Genesis*, indistinguishable (so far as I can see) in style and method from that part of the work which was written by Clarembald. The manuscripts make no distinction between two parts, still less between two authors, of the work. All the manuscripts are incomplete in various ways: some have only the first part, or most of the first part, but in all versions this is incomplete; and the manuscripts which contain all that now survives attribute no part of the material to Thierry. To me, the whole appearance of the work – the lack of divisions and organisation; the confusions and repetitions; the incompleteness – suggests a draft by Clarembald which has not yet been worked up into its final form.

If this is the case, we do not possess Thierry's *libellus* on the six days of Creation in its original form, any more than we possess his commentary on the *De Trinitate* in the form in which he wrote it. Nevertheless, we may accept Clarembald's assurance that the main part comes from Thierry, and it provides us with by far our best material for judging Thierry. Moreover, it is our sole source for authenticating those parts of the commentary on the *De Trinitate* which can reasonably be judged to have come from Thierry's lectures.

These small details may seem very unimportant alongside the larger issues of the Platonism, the poetry, and the scientific independence of the school of Chartres. They certainly lack the glamour of these great themes. But it is through lack of attention to the way in which the ideas of the schools were elaborated, that grandiose and misleading concepts of the school of Chartres have taken root. It is only when we understand the conditions in which the masters worked, and recognise the method of combining and correcting (or sometimes corrupting) ideas from master to master, that we can see the thought of the period in its true shape.

This theme may be further illustrated by one more apparently insignificant fact about the transmission of Thierry's work on the Creation,

which Father Haring has brought to light. He found in a manuscript (*H*),[51] belonging to the Cistercian monastery of Heiligenkreuz, a quotation which establishes beyond doubt Thierry's authorship of at least one passage in the work preserved by Clarembald. The preservation of the quotation in an Austrian manuscript far distant from the place, and even more distant from the environment, in which Thierry worked, is unexpected; and before we look at the quotation, its context deserves some investigation. The monastery of Heiligenkreuz was founded in 1133 or 1135 under the direct inspiration of Otto of Freising immediately after his return, with a group of like-minded companions, all of them converts to the Cistercian Rule, from the schools of Paris. [52] The manuscript which contains the quotation from Thierry contains a miscellaneous collection of theological treatises and notes, such as students seem quite often to have brought with them from the schools, and which in a surprisingly large number of cases were preserved in monastic libraries in manuscripts much grander than the comparatively humble origin of their contents would have led us to expect. *H* is just such a manuscript. To judge from its script it may well have belonged to the earliest collection of books formed under the first abbot of Heiligenkreuz between 1135 and 1147. Its contents, so far as they have been identified, derive mainly from the teaching of Hugh of St Victor and Abelard.

The quotation with which we are concerned is the second in a series of comments on miscellaneous texts in the Old Testiment, which occupy ff. 110–122 of the manuscript. Our passage (f. 110^{v}) begins as follows: 'Magister Tirricus super locum illum *Posuit Deus firmamentum in medio aquarum:* Aere ex superioris elementi virtute illuminato, consequebatur naturaliter ut, ipsius aeris illuminatione mediante, calefaceret ignis tertium elementum, id est aquam.' After some dozen lines of elaboration the quotation ends: 'Et tunc aer aptus fuit ut firmamentum appellaretur, quasi firme sustinens superiorem aquam et inferiorem continens, utramque ab altera intransgressibiliter determinans.' The text of the passage in *H* differs very little from the text as transmitted by Clarembald and printed by Father Haring. But the differences are significant. In the first place, *H* begins with a Biblical reference, which Clarembald's text omits. This makes it clear that Thierry's words are a comment on a precise Biblical passage, Genesis 1, 6. Secondly, after the end of the quotation from

[51] The contents of the manuscript (no. 153) are listed by B. Gsell, *Xenia Bernardina, pars secunda: HSS Verzeichnisse der Cistercienser-Stifte*, 1, 1891, 159–60. A fuller description, with text of the version of Abelard's *Theologia* contained in the manuscript, is in *Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica*, ii, ed. E. M. Buytaert, *Corpus Christianorum med.*, XII, 1969, 377–9, 401–51. The extract from Thierry is on f 110^{v} – 11.

[52] For the founding of Heiligenkreuz, see the brief account in A. Hofmeister, 'Studien über Otto v. Freising,' *Neues Archiv*, 37, 1912, 747–8.

Thierry in *H*, Clarembald's text goes on to give an alternative explanation of the key word *firmamentum*, which is not in *H*. This looks like a later elaboration (by Clarembald?) of a kind very familiar in the transmission of many scholastic texts. Then, finally, at one point, *H* has a reading which could not have come from Clarembald's text as printed.[53] From these various details it is clear that the compiler of *H* was not quoting from the text preserved by Clarembald; his text came from a purer source, probably from lecture notes, and it is an independent witness to Thierry's teaching.

The main interest of *H* is that it re-inforces Clarembald's picture of Thierry as his contemporaries saw him – a master lecturing in Paris in the 1130s in the company of Hugh of St Victor and Abelard; and it re-enforces also our impression of the extent to which, for Thierry as for other masters of his time, we depend upon the transmission of his teaching by his pupils. It is against this background that Thierry's work is mainly to be understood, as the work of a lecturer in the schools of Paris in the days of their first full vigorous life, holding his own among the greatest masters of the day, on a level with Hugh of Victor, more lucid than Gilbert of Poitiers, more reliably orthodox than Abelard, and perhaps more learned than any of them on the seven liberal arts as a whole. As the justly admiring writer of his epitaph wrote, he was both 'the worthy successor of Aristotle', and the teacher who 'taught plainly what Plato and Socrates had hidden under the covering of metaphor.' That is to say, he was equally at home in logic and cosmology, and (we can add) in rhetoric and arithmetic.

But what, in practice, does this mean? In answer to this question, I shall take a passage from each of the two works whose external features I have been discussing.

1. My first example comes from the version of the commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, which (if I am right) probably represents Petrus Helyas's reworking of Thierry's lectures. There are brief parallels to it in the other versions of Thierry's teaching on Creation.[54] The passage, which I shall quote, is part of a comment on a few sentences in the second section of Boethius's treatise beginning with the words *Omne namque esse ex forma est*:

> Plato said well that matter is a substance somewhere between nothing and something: it is not something since *per se* it has no actual existence; but it is equally not nothing, since it has the potentiality

[53] Aquarum vaporalium labiliumque *H*: aquarum labilium quae *C* (*Commentaries on Boethius*, p. 558).
[54] *Commentaries on Boethius*, pp. 76–7; cf. pp. 162–3, 275–7, and *Clarembald* pp. 234–5.

> of being something. Hence the same author says that it is flexible like wax, in that it has the potentiality of being twisted this way or that.[55] Aristotle indeed calls matter a 'disembodied body': a 'body' because it can become a body; 'disembodied' because it is not yet actually a body, and lacks the form of a body. There are therefore, according to Plato, two principles in things: pure being (actus) without further potentiality (sine possibilitate); and, at the other extreme, matter or mere potentiality (possibilitas). Between these two extremes there are the *forms* of things and *actual* things. The *forms* of things descend from God as their first principle; and the actual things are subsumed under their forms, while matter or potentiality underlies actual things. Nevertheless, although Plato named God and matter as the two principles of things, let no one think that he made matter coeternal with God. On the contrary, he thought that matter came from God, for he everywhere followed his master Pythagoras, who named unity and duality as the two principles of things, calling God 'unity' and matter 'duality'. Now since duality comes from unity, it is clear that, in his view, matter came from God; and he deviated from truth only in this one thing, that he thought neither form nor matter was created For it was Plato's habit to call nothing 'created' that did not come from the union of matter and form. Aristotle, however, considering even more subtly this distinction between *actus* and *possibilitas* in his book *Peri Hermeneias*, made a threefold distinction: between (i) those things which have actuality without potentiality; (ii) those things which have actuality with potentiality; and (iii) those things which have potentiality without actuality. Actuality without potentiality is *Necessitas* and therefore *Aeternitas*, as I have stated above; and I have already spoken about *Aeternitas*, so far as it is relevant to our present subject, and so far as it can be treated by human reason.

I have quoted this passage at some length because it brings us to the heart of the Platonism of the twelfth century schools. There is no trace here of that spontaneous Platonism which we have recognised in St. Anselm. What we have is a scholarly commentator, summarising the doctrine of his text, filling out his explanation with references to other texts, and so far as possible giving his text an acceptable Christian interpretation – for instance, he will not entertain the idea that Plato thought of matter as co-eternal with God, and he gives a subtle linguistic explanation of Plato's apparent error. The lecturer is not thinking of Plato as a philosopher with a distinctive point of view, but as a scientist who has inherited truths from his predecessors, especially from Pythagoras, which

[55] This simile is taken, not from Plato, but from Calcidius p. 311.

can be used to interpret his words. Moreover, Plato's successors, Aristotle especially, can also be used to clarify the text; and the words of the commentator on the *Timaeus*, Calcidius, can be quoted as if they were those of Plato himself. Just as Clarembald could elaborate and combine the thoughts of *his* masters, Hugh of St. Victor and Thierry; and just as Petrus Helyas could elaborate the teaching of Thierry and William of Conches; so Thierry himself imagined Plato elaborating the teaching of Pythagoras, and Aristotle and Calcidius elaborating that of Plato. So homogeneous was the whole process, that when Thierry says that Plato said something, he often means that Calcidius, his interpreter, said it. The masters created the past in their own image, and imagined that the great masters of the past behaved exactly as they did. Knowledge grew, and had always grown, by a double process of accumulation and increasingly refined analysis of the deposit of the past.

The process of accumulation did not exclude the proper exercise of individual genius. This was displayed partly in sharpening and refining, but most creatively in perceiving connexions which had eluded previous observers. All the masters of this period had read and approved a sentence which they found in Horace:

> Dixeris egregie notum si callida verbum
> Reddiderit iunctura novum.

'You will have spoken well, if you make an old word new, by giving it a fresh context.' Substitute the word *sententia* for *verbum* and we have a perfect formulation of the kind of originality, which was open to the masters of this period. By putting old thoughts in new contexts, they could build up a new body of learning, which in its turn could provide a foundation for new codes of law and a new organisation of society.

2. We shall find a good example of this kind of originality in the second of my two examples of Thierry at work. It is an application to theology of a mathematical doctrine concerning the peculiar properties of the number One. It went as follows: One is unique in that, although other numbers are compounds of One, One has properties which other numbers lack: in particular, if you multiply One by itself, you get the number with which you began: $1 \times 1 = 1$; whereas, when you multiply other numbers by themselves, you get an infinite variety of answers, but never the number with which you first started, e.g. $2 \times 2 = 4$, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The application of this doctrine to the difference between God, the single and unchangeable source of all things, and the created world, the scene of diversity and flux, had long been known. But Thierry gave it a new application to the doctrine of the Trinity.

To understand the point of his application, it is necessary to look back about fifty years. Ever since about 1087 when Roscelin had concluded that the orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity was logically unacceptable, and that, in order to preserve the separation of the three Persons of the Trinity, it would be necessary to speak of three Gods, many attempts had been made to provide an acceptable explanation of the doctrine, which would be both orthodox and consistent with contemporary logical teaching. None had succeeded. In every other area of theology, the application of the technical equipment of the Arts to the clarification of orthodox doctrine had been brilliantly succesful; but the Trinity resisted all the blandishments of the Arts. Every known form of classification had been tried in the hope of finding a formula which would do justice at once to the separation of the three Persons and their total identity in every respect other than their unique relationship. Genus and species, matter and form, substance and accidents, the definition of 'Person', the divine attributes (Power, Wisdom, Goodness) had all been examined in the hope of finding a model corresponding to the Trinity. Although several of these applications of the secular sciences to the doctrine of the Trinity had limited success, they all broke down under pressure. Nevertheless, at a time when the Jewish controversy, in which the Trinity had a central place, was still active, and when new definitions were the great contribution which the schools could make to theological discussion, a successful definition of the Trinity was of high importance.

It seems very likely that it was Thierry who had the idea that the $1 \times 1 = 1$ formula offered a new chance of success. The idea came from St. Augustine who had remarked in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could be represented as Unity (the Father), Equality (the Son), and Connection or Concord (the Holy Spirit).[56] Thierry would also have been familiar with the discussion of unity and equality in lecturing on Boethius's *Arithmetic*. Drawing on these sources and on Calcidius, he applied the mathematical formula $1 \times 1 = 1$ to the Trinity, and the parallel is worked out at some length both in the work on the Creation and in more than one version of the commentary on the Trinity.[57] There is nothing in these works that has a better claim to come from Thierry, and we must ask what it tells us about him.

[56] *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1, 5 (= 1, 12 in the edition by W. M. Green, *C.S.E.L.*, 1963, p. 11)

[57] The mathematical concepts of *unitas*, *equalitas*, and *connexio* appear in all the Commentaries on the *De Trinitate* associated with Thierry, and in the Commentary by Clarembald, and also in the work on the Creation. But they appear in widely different forms. If we use Fr. Haring's classification of the Commentaries as 1. *Glosa*, 2. *Lectiones* and 3. *Commentum*, the following differences appear: 1. The *Glosa*, (pp. 296–7), after mentioning the different ways of analysing the Trinity (*secundum physicam doctrinam*; *theologice*; *mathematice*; *ethice*), discusses the mathematical model very briefly with the remark that only Augustine used it ('Mathematicam super hanc rem doctrinam non addit nisi Augustinus dicens unitatem esse in Patre et eiusdem unitatis equalitatem in Filio, atque unitatis equalitatisque connexionem et amorem in Spiritu Sancto'). 2. The *Lectiones* (pp. 224–5) mention the threefold

In the first place, it was undoubtedly a good idea to seek a mathematical formula to describe the Trinity. All the psychological and logical models that had been tried had broken down. Mathematics remained. Students of the *Timaeus* had learnt, what everyone instinctively feels, that numbers, with their mysterious properties of harmony and proportion, more nearly express the nature of the reality which lies behind the visible world than anything else. They are free from the objections that at once arise when concepts which have human connotations (like Memory, Reason and Will) or associations with the physical world (like genus and species, substance and accident) are used to describe the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Numbers are invisible, incorporeal, outside time and space, eternally the same. In any conceivable state of being, One multiplied by One remains One. This seems a good beginning in describing the relationship of the Father and the Son. Thierry enlarged on this theme. But the real difficulty arises with the Holy Spirit. Failure to deal adequately with the Holy Spirit had been the main cause of Abelard's downfall; and Thierry was no more successful than Abelard. He was only less persistent. In all the versions of the number theory of the Trinity, except in the version ascribed to Petrus Helias where geometrical considerations are introduced, the place of the Holy Spirit is disposed of in a few words: in the formula 1×1, the Father is the *One* and the Son its *Equal*, the Holy Spirit is the *connection* between them. This is what St. Augustine had said. But it is quite unacceptable. It would make the Holy Spirit an entity different from the Father and the Son – mathematically, not a number like the One and its Equal, but a multiplication sign. It may have been an immediate apprehension of this weakness that caused Augustine to drop the formula in his later work in the Trinity. It may have been a similar apprehension that caused Thierry to drop my further speculation on the subject. He did not withdraw; no one attacked him; he simply gave up.

division (*theologice*, *mathematice*, *ethice*) and give a brief sketch of the mathematical doctrine of *unitas*, *equalitas* and *connexio* as applied to the Trinity by Augustine. The sketch ends with a note of reservation: 'Conexio enim unitas est . . . Tamen non concedimus quod conexio equalitas sit.' 3. The *Commentum* (pp. 78–80) gives an extensive account of the mathematical doctrine of the square of One (Unitas ex se per semel equalitatem gignit) concluding with a quotation from the Sybilline literature, which (as we know from Otto of Freising) had a wide popularity at the time of the second Crusade, and a brief account of the Holy Spirit as the *connexio* between *unitas* and *equalitas*. Clarembald's account of the doctrine in his *Commentary on Boethius* is very close to the *Commentum* in words, ideas, context, and in using the same quotations from the Hispanic Sybil. *Life and Works of Clarembald*, pp. 119–23). Finally, the Clarembald-Thierry treatise on Creation (pp. 571–5) has an extensive account of the mathematical doctrine of *unitas* (= Father) and equalitas (= Son), but the promised account of connexio (= Holy Spirit) is lacking. From these varied indications, it seems reasonable to conclude that the idea was much discussed in the circle of Thierry and his pupils, but that no final or satisfactory formulation was ever arrived at.

Indeed, in about 1150 he gave up more than his trinitarian speculations. He abandoned his studies altogether, gave his books to the cathedral at Chartres, dropped his title of 'doctor', and became once more a learner in the silence of a monastic solitude.[58]

Meanwhile, the mathematical explanation of the Trinity spread outside Thierry's circle, and circulated for a few years in the inglorious company of half-successful theories. In the 1160s Richard of St. Victor devoted a small work to an exposition of the two main trinitarian explanations of the previous generation, the *unitas, equalitas, concordia* doctrine, and the *potentia, sapientia,* and *bonitas* alternative: he named no contemporary author, but many would have known that Abelard was the source of the second; and some may have remembered that Thierry had promoted the first.[59] Then, probably in the same decade, Alan of Lille collected many of the Trinitarian explanations and questions which were current in his day: one of them was the mathematical formulation derived from Augustine, but it was only one of a vast miscellany of questions and half-satisfactory answers on every aspect of the divine nature. The search for definitive solutions and clear-cut frontiers between reason and faith seems by this time to have degenerated (temporarily at least) into a series of scholastic puzzles, infinitely tedious.[60] So the mathematical explanation of the Trinity passed into the limbo of bright ideas which had lost their brightness, until Nicholas of Cusa, searching for jewels in the decaying body of scholasticism, ill-advisedly revived it in the fifteenth century.[61]

But, if we return to the first half of the twelfth century, the argument must be seen as one of the many attempts to clarify theological doctrines with the help of the secular sciences. It was a *callida iunctura* of theology and arithmetic, and it is a good example of the kind of thing that many masters were attempting. Their efforts to make connections across the frontiers of different disciplines were sometimes successful, sometimes disastrous; but they set the intellectual tone of the schools for the next two hundred years. They created a tradition of accurate thought, and developed procedures for answering almost every question. In doing this, they developed more than a technique of enquiry; they developed new

58 'In latebris heremi . . . dedidicit 'doctor' dici voluitque doceri,' Epitaph pr. by A. Vernet, *Mélanges C. Brunel*. 1948, ii, 660–70.

59 Richard de Saint-Victor, *Opuscules Théologiques*, ed. J. Ribaillier (Paris, 1967) pp. 182–7.

60 'La somme *Quoniam Homines* d'Alain de Lille', ed. P. Glorieux, *Archives d'hist. doct. et litt. du Moyen Age*, 27, 1952, pp. 258–55. In the same decade, Simon of Tournai includes the formula in a corrupt form in a long list of different ways of describing the Trinity. (See his commentary on the Athanasian Creed, ed. Häring, *AHDLMA*, 43, 1976, p. 167).

61 See especially *De Docta Ignorantia* (Nicolai de Cusa *Opera Omnia*, ed. E. Hoffmann and R. Klibansky, 1, 1934) pp. 17–19, with the references given there.

and coherent views of the universe, of the church, and of human society, and they laid intellectual foundations on which secular and ecclesiastical institutions alike could be extended and transformed.

V. CONCLUSION

It is against this background that we must judge the work of William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres. It seems to me that they lose nothing – indeed that they can only gain – by being freed from the school of Chartres and placed in the wider setting of a common scholastic enterprise, freed from the label of Chartrian Platonism and placed among the masters of the schools who used the *Timaeus* as a source book among many other texts. The weakness of the concept of the school of Chartres lies less in its exaggeration of the geographical importance of Chartres, than in its tendency to divide the intellectual effort of the period in the wrong way, to emphasise qualities which do not exist, and ignore other qualities which are of central importance. On these topics there is still much that might be said. The place of poetry in propagating and fixing scholastic doctrines; the use of allegory as a method of interpretation, which made it possible to swallow more of an ancient text than would have been possible without this sugar coating; the relationship between Abelard and William of Conches, on which Mr Dronke has made some illuminating remarks[62] – these are all subjects that deserve further investigation. Platonism, poetry, science, allegory, and the works of Thierry and of William of Conches, have all been drawn into the orbit of the school of Chartres. I believe that they will all appear in a clearer light when they are set free from that connection. No person or thing will be diminished by this freedom, least of all the beauty of Chartres and the inspiration of the scholars who first stamped Chartres on our consciousness. Chartres itself will always excite admiration and enthusiasm; but the School of Chartres has been to modern medievalists what the *Timaeus* was to twelfth century scientists, a door that must be left behind, forgotten even, if we are to explore the larger world of the schools in which we now find ourselves.

62 *Fabula: explorations into the uses of Myth in medieval Platonism*, (Leiden, 1974) pp. 55–67.