Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris

Theologians and the University c. 1100–1330

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For Betty R. Wei and Teh-Hsing Wei

monastic critique. The school of Saint Victor could not, however, support large numbers of masters and students, and did not offer a model that could be reproduced on a large scale. There was now a discourse that effectively neutralized the monastic critique, but no large-scale institutional form for it to legitimate.

3 The University of Paris in the thirteenth century

A new kind of career, an academic career, had become possible in the twelfth-century schools. Only loosely tied to existing institutions, however, it involved a high level of risk, and the careers of specific individuals were potentially short lived. Students had a large say in who would find an audience, and those who wished to make the transition from student to master often did so by competing with their masters. At the same time, schoolmen were vulnerable to a monastic critique which insisted that religious knowledge could only be acquired by the virtuous, and that teachers must take responsibility for the effect they had on their students. Monasteries provided institutional guarantees of virtue and responsibility for reception which the schoolmen conspicuously lacked. The first part of this chapter will focus on the institutional development of a university in Paris. This involved the stabilization of the academic career, with masters asserting control over students, and the appropriation of key monastic ideals to establish a new discourse that allowed the university to negotiate a privileged position in society. The emergence of the university did not, however, bring an end to intellectual differences. Very different approaches to knowing, especially knowing about God, will be illustrated in the second and third parts of the chapter by exploring the work of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, two of the most outstanding thinkers of the thirteenth century, both of whom spent significant parts of their careers in Paris. The fourth and final part of the chapter will look at moments when intellectual difference led to conflict and condemnation.

Institutionalization, cultural identity and a new discourse of learning

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, scholars in a few places began to adopt forms of collective organization that embraced or to some extent replaced the schools which had flourished independently

for many years. They joined together in corporations or guilds that came to enjoy formal legal standing, and acquired rights and privileges. With hindsight it is possible to identify the emergence of the earliest universities, although no one could have offered this interpretation at the time. On the other hand, contemporaries were aware that changes were taking place, and they described the new institutions of learning as *studia generalia*. In other words, they perceived certain places as general centres of learning.[1] If the term signified more than a vague recognition of prestige, it probably referred to their ability to attract students and masters from across Europe, and their capacity to offer teaching in advanced subjects like theology, law and medicine, as well as the arts. The word 'universitas' was not applied specifically to institutions of learning; it was a very general term that could be used to describe any corporate body with legal rights, and it is a matter of chance that vernacular versions of the word have survived to refer exclusively to institutions of higher education.[2]

The process by which the first universities emerged is difficult to analyse because very little evidence survives. Historians have nevertheless tried to explain this process and to discover the origins of the medieval university, essentially offering three types of explanation. First, the emergence of universities has been explained in terms of conflict between scholars and both local ecclesiastical authorities and the town authorities. In response to these conflicts, the scholars acted collectively to protect themselves, and in the course of these conflicts they gained privileges from kings, popes and emperors.[3] The second type of explanation stresses debates amongst learned men, and especially the development of shared educational ideals to which the emerging universities gave expression.[4] The third approach treats the university as

[1] G. Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Institutional and Intellectual History* (New York, 1968), pp. 16–19; M. M. Mulchahey, *'First the bow is bent': Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 352–60; J. Verger, 'Patterns', in H. de Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe. Vol. 1: Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 35–74 at 36–7; O. Weijers, *Terminologie des universités au xiiie siècle* (Rome, 1987), pp. 34–45.

[2] For extended analysis of the term, its usages and ideological associations, see P. Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas. Expressions du mouvement communautaire dans le moyen-âge latin* (Paris, 1970). See also Weijers, *Terminologie des universités*, pp. 16–26.

[3] Notable examples include H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, revised and ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 3 vols. (1936; repr. Oxford, 1997), esp. vol. 1, pp. 269–432; A. B. Cobban, *The Medieval Universities: Their Development and Organization* (London, 1975), esp. pp. 75–95.

[4] See, for example, S. C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and their Critics, 1100–1215* (Stanford, 1985), where his argument is summarized at pp. 3, 5–8, 310–12.

a product of its urban environment. Scholars deliberately copied artisans and merchants, their classrooms were like workshops, they sold knowledge in the way that artisans and merchants sold their goods, and the university was therefore a guild like any other trade guild.[5] Recent scholarship has tended to acknowledge a measure of validity in all three approaches.[6]

The gradual emergence of *studia generalia* is generally associated with Bologna, Paris and Oxford. From early in the thirteenth century, further universities were established in two ways. Some were set up by masters and students migrating from an existing university, usually in response to conflict with local authorities. Thus, for example, Cambridge was created by scholars from Oxford (1209–14), Padua by scholars from Bologna (1222), and Orléans and Angers by Parisian scholars (1229–31). Other universities were deliberately founded by a major secular or ecclesiastical authority, often for specific political reasons. The earliest examples were Naples, set up by Emperor Frederick II in 1224, and Toulouse, created by the papacy in 1229. By 1300 there were at least eighteen universities in western Europe.[7] Amongst the earliest universities, Bologna and Paris were the most influential in terms of organization and structure, offering two very different models which later universities imitated, while developing their own manifold variations.

It is worth considering Bologna briefly in order to appreciate what was distinctive about Paris. The *studium generale* at Bologna was preeminent in the study of law, and students exercised a significant measure of control, although perhaps not as much as once thought.[8] The

[5] See J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. T. L. Fagan (Oxford, 1993), pp. xiv–xv, 5–6, 57–8, 61–3, 93–6.

[6] See judicious comments in Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, pp. 3, 5, 311 and J. Verger, 'A propos de la naissance de l'université de Paris: contexte social, enjeu politique, portée intellectuelle', in J. Fried (ed.), *Schulen und Studium im Sozialen Wandel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, Vorträge und Forschungen 30 (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 69–96.

[7] Verger, 'Patterns', pp. 52–5. Verger suggests that the inclusion of disputed cases would raise the total to twenty-three.

[8] For traditional accounts, see M. Bellomo, *The Common Legal Past of Europe 1000–1800*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Washington, DC, 1995), pp. 112–22; J. A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 223–30, 251; A. B. Cobban, 'Medieval student power', *Past and Present* 53 (1971): 28–66 at 35–43; Cobban, *Medieval Universities*, pp. 48–74; P. Kibre, *The Nations in the Mediaeval Universities* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), pp. 3–14, 29–64; O. Pedersen, *The First Universities: Studium Generale and the Origins of University Education in Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 138–44, 160–2, 208–12; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 87–268; S. Stelling-Michaud, *L'université de Bologne et la pénétration des droits romain et canonique en Suisse aux xiie et xive siècles* (Geneva, 1955), pp. 13–46. For significant corrections in the light of recent and ongoing research, I am extremely

rights and privileges were largely the product of conflict with the local town and ecclesiastical authorities. The three most significant documents were the charter granted by Philip Augustus in 1200, the statutes issued by Robert of Courson in 1215 and the bull *Parens scientiarum* of 1231.

The crisis of 1200 began when a German student sent a servant to buy wine, and the innkeeper tried to overcharge him. The student and some of his friends assaulted the innkeeper and smashed up the inn. The innkeeper went to the royal provost of Paris, who led an attack on the hostel in which a number of German students were residing. Several students were killed. The Paris masters immediately went on strike, suspending all lectures and threatening to leave unless the king punished the provost and his men. The king immediately came down on the side of the university. The provost and his men were imprisoned for life, and the king granted a charter protecting the scholars in the future. The charter included the following provisions: all citizens were obliged to report crimes they saw a layman commit against a scholar; they had to help arrest the criminal and testify in court; the royal provost and the city's magistrates were prohibited from arresting scholars or seizing their goods. The charter concluded by ordering the provost and people of Paris to take a public oath to abide by the charter, and requiring every new provost to repeat the oath before an assembly of scholars.[9] The masters and students had thus expressed their solidarity through collective action, and the king had recognized them as a distinct group, awarding them special status in relation to the people of Paris and his own officials. This status was reaffirmed by public ritual every time a new provost assumed office and performed the highly symbolic act of oath-taking.[10]

At some point before 1208–9, the masters in Paris drew up a set of statutes that does not survive. This is apparent from a bull, *Ex litteris vestre*, sent by Pope Innocent III to the masters of theology, canon law and arts at that time. The bull noted that some masters of arts had deviated from established practices by wearing inappropriate dress, failing to observe due order in lectures and disputations, and neglecting to

[9] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 59–61. P. Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges in the Middle Ages* (London, 1961), pp. 86–7; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, p. 28; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 158–9; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 294–8; S. E. Young, '"Consilio hominum nostrorum": a comparative study of royal responses to crisis at the University of Paris, 1200–1231', *History of Universities* 22 (2007): 1–20 at 3–6.

[10] C. F. Weber, '*Ces grands privilèges*: the symbolic use of written documents in the foundation and institutionalization processes of medieval universities', *History of Universities* 19 (2004): 12–62 at 16–23.

attend funerals. The masters had responded by unanimously selecting eight colleagues to address these issues in statutes, and requiring everyone to take an oath to observe them. When a certain master G. had refused, the masters had deprived him of membership of their body. This master had now submitted, and the point of the bull was to allow his readmission.[11] Clearly the masters were capable of taking collective action on their own account, and the pope was willing to back them up.

The first surviving statutes date from 1215 and were issued by Robert of Courson as a papal legate. These statutes were partly shaped by conflict with both the town and the local ecclesiastical authorities, although there was much that reflected a consensus amongst the scholars themselves. They were certainly not imposed on the academic community by the papal legate because Robert had taught theology in Paris for many years and the opening section of the document makes it clear that he had been instructed to consult, presumably with his former colleagues: 'Let all know that, since we have had a special mandate from the pope to take effective measures to reform the state of the Parisian scholars for the better, wishing with the counsel of good men to provide for the tranquility of the scholars in the future, we have decreed and ordained in this wise.'[12] Furthermore, the following statutes, which were addressed to 'all the masters and scholars of Paris', dealt with matters that had long been of concern, including the issues known to have been the subject of the lost statutes produced by the scholars independently. In many respects they have to be interpreted as the product of cooperation as much as conflict.[13]

Modern readers are often struck by the statutes' apparent lack of organization.[14] The way in which the statutes were set out, however, reveals a great deal about the mindset of those responsible for them. The first section concerned the process of becoming a master of arts and then teaching the arts:

> No one shall lecture in the arts at Paris before he is twenty-one years of age, and he shall have heard lectures for at least six years before he begins to lecture, and he shall promise to lecture for at least two years, unless a reasonable cause prevents, which he ought to prove publicly or before examiners. He shall

[11] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 8, pp. 67–8. See Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 299–303; Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, pp. 89–90; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 24–5; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, p. 295.

[12] *University Records*, no. 15, pp. 27–8.

[13] Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, pp. 282–3.

[14] See, for example, S. C. Ferruolo, 'The Paris statutes of 1215 reconsidered', *History of Universities* 5 (1985): 1–14 at 6–7; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, p. 305.

not be stained by any infamy, and when he is ready to lecture, he shall be examined according to the form which is contained in the writing of the lord bishop of Paris, where is contained the peace confirmed between the chancellor and scholars by judges delegated by the pope, namely, by the bishop and dean of Troyes and by P. the bishop and J. the chancellor of Paris approved and confirmed. And they shall lecture on the books of Aristotle on dialectic old and new in the schools ordinarily and not *ad cursum*. They shall also lecture on both Priscians ordinarily, or at least on one. They shall not lecture on feast days except on philosophers and rhetoric and the quadrivium and *Barbarismus* and ethics, if it please them, and the fourth book of the *Topics*. They shall not lecture on the books of Aristotle on metaphysics and natural philosophy or on summaries of them or concerning the doctrine of master David of Dinant or the heretic Amaury or Mauritius of Spain.[15]

There had long been complaints that scholars set about teaching when they were too young, when they had not studied for long enough, and when their behaviour was morally deficient. The statutes immediately set appropriate standards and indicated how magisterial candidates would be scrutinized by alluding to the resolution of a bitter conflict that had recently occurred between the scholars and the chancellor of the cathedral of Notre Dame, John of Candeilles. At issue were the way in which the chancellor exercised his right to grant the licence to teach, and the extent of his powers of jurisdiction over scholars. Previous chancellors had worked harmoniously with the scholars, but John was the first of a number of chancellors and bishops of Paris who tried to control the scholars by undermining their independence. The scholars appealed to Pope Innocent III, who backed them wholeheartedly. In 1212, after noting that he had seen nothing like this when he had studied at Paris, he ordered the bishop, dean and archdeacon of Troyes to censure the chancellor if he did not abandon the practices which offended the scholars. After a process of arbitration, it was the bishop of Paris, Peter of Nemours, who in 1213 recorded the settlement to which the statutes referred. When granting the licence to teach, the chancellor was not to exact oaths of fidelity or obedience, nor was he permitted to charge. His powers to imprison and fine scholars were also carefully circumscribed. Further rules about the granting of the licence to teach were also imposed for as long as John remained chancellor. They ensured that the licence would be given to anyone deemed fit by the masters, although John could still grant licences to candidates who did not have their backing.[16] This dispute was over well before 1215, and it

[15] *University Records*, no. 15, p. 28.
[16] See *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 14, pp. 73–4; nos. 16–18, pp. 75–7; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, pp. 296–9; Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, pp. 88–9; Leff, *Paris and*

was not the immediate trigger for the granting of the statutes, but the masters took care to see that the settlement in their favour was embedded within the statutes. New masters were also obliged to teach, or to be 'regent' masters, as they were called, for a minimum of two years.

This section of the statutes then dealt with the teaching that a master of arts should undertake, sorting out matters of curriculum and timetable. Set texts were specified for key subjects: the relevant works by Aristotle for dialectic; two parts of a work by Priscian and part of a work by Donatus, referred to as the *Barbarismus*, for grammar; Aristotle's *Topics* for practising the construction of certain types of argument. Dialectic and grammar were clearly established as the core subjects because they were to be taught ordinarily rather than *ad cursum*. Ordinary lectures contained in-depth analysis and were given by masters, while lectures *ad cursum* offered more general summaries, and were usually given by bachelors as part of the process by which they qualified to become masters.[17] Lectures on rhetoric, the remaining part of the trivium, and the quadrivium could be delivered on feast days, along with ethics and further practice at grammar and argument. The section concluded by prohibiting lectures on Aristotle's metaphysics and natural philosophy, along with works by recently condemned heretics, thus repeating a ban that had been issued by various bishops in 1210.[18]

The start of the second section did not specify whether it concerned students and masters of arts or all the students and masters, but particular rules within it were directed at students and masters of specific subjects.

In the *principia* and meetings of the masters and in the responsions and oppositions of the boys and youths there shall be no drinking. They may summon some friends or associates, but only a few. Donations of clothing or other things as has been customary, or more, we urge should be made, especially to the poor. None of the masters lecturing in arts shall have a cope except one round, black and reaching to the ankles, at least while it is new. Use of the pallium is permitted. No one shall wear with the round cope shoes that are ornamented or with elongated pointed toes. If any scholar in arts or theology dies, half of the masters of arts shall attend the funeral at one time, the other half the next time, and no one shall leave until the sepulture is finished, unless he has reasonable cause. If any master in arts or theology dies, all the masters shall keep vigils, each shall read or cause to be read the Psalter, each shall attend the church where is celebrated the watch until midnight or the greater part of the

Oxford Universities, pp. 25–6; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 167–70; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 304–9.
[17] G. Leff, 'The *Trivium* and the three philosophies', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 307–36 at 326.
[18] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 11, pp. 70–1; *University Records*, no. 14, pp. 26–7.

night, unless reasonable cause prevent. On the day when the master is buried, no one shall lecture or dispute.[19]

This section thus began by seeking to regulate conduct. First, the statutes tried to limit the festivities that took place at key transitional moments in a student's career. After receiving his licence to teach, a new master was admitted into the corporation of masters by means of inception, which meant acting as a master for the first time in special disputations, sometimes called 'principia'. Before becoming a master, a student had to become a bachelor. The 'responsions and oppositions' almost certainly refer to the examination process during which the candidate was obliged to respond to questions and then 'determine' a disputation. Arts students usually became bachelors at the age of about eighteen or nineteen.[20] The statutes permitted new masters and bachelors to celebrate their success, but there was to be no drinking and the scale was to remain modest.[21] Charitable giving, however, was strongly encouraged. Dress regulations for masters of arts were then set out. The last part of the section stipulated the funerary practices to be followed when students and masters in arts and theology died. This was a significant step in establishing the university's status as a corporate body. Religious ritual served to generate a sense of community in a way that was already characteristic of urban guilds and religious confraternities.[22]

The next two sections concerned all the students and masters. The first bluntly confirmed that they owned a meadow that was also claimed by the abbey of Saint Germain. The second addressed a range of issues, including some of fundamental importance to the constitution of the university.

Each master shall have jurisdiction over his scholar. No one shall occupy a classroom or house without asking the consent of the tenant, provided one has a chance to ask it. No one shall receive the licentiate from the chancellor or another for money given or promise made or other condition agreed upon.

[19] *University Records*, no. 15, p. 29.

[20] Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 54–5; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 262–9; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 450–62.

[21] On drinking as a 'bonding mechanism' in universities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see R. M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 95–6.

[22] Ferruolo, 'The Paris statutes of 1215 reconsidered', p. 10; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, p. 300. On the significance of ritual in late medieval universities, and on the role of burial services in establishing the late medieval university as 'a liturgical community', see F. Rexroth, 'Ritual and the creation of social knowledge: the opening celebrations of medieval German universities', in W. J. Courtenay and J. Miethke (eds.), *Universities and Schooling in Medieval Society* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 65–80 at 79.

Also, the masters and scholars can make both between themselves and with other persons obligations and constitutions supported by faith or penalty or oath in these cases: namely the murder or mutilation of a scholar or atrocious injury done a scholar, if justice should not be forthcoming, arranging the prices of lodgings, costume, burial, lectures and disputations, so, however, that the university be not thereby dissolved or destroyed.[23]

The first sentence set down one of the key organizational principles of the university. A student joined the university by submitting to a particular master who accepted responsibility for him. At the lowest level, the university was composed of masters, each with a number of individual students clustered round him. The next sentence addressed a matter of importance in the relations between the university and the people of Paris. The university owned very little in the way of buildings, so classrooms and accommodation had to be rented. Here masters and students were reminded that they must negotiate reasonably with property owners. At this point the statutes turned abruptly to relations with the local ecclesiastical authorities, stating explicitly the key principle at stake in the conflict with the chancellor to which allusion had already been made: the chancellor had to grant the licence to teach without charging money or imposing any other kind of obligation. This was followed by the line of greatest constitutional significance in the whole document since it recognized the university as a legal corporation. The masters and students could make their own rules, require members of their body to take oaths to obey these rules, and punish those who transgressed them. Moreover, they could make legally binding agreements with other parties. This was the case with regard to a list of issues that, in addition to several matters already treated in the statutes, included the killing or injuring of scholars, and rent control. The power of the corporation was, however, limited in one important respect. The university was not to be 'dissolved or destroyed' as a consequence of their actions, which meant that they could not go on strike and leave to study elsewhere. As we shall see, this was soon to prove their strongest weapon.

After these crucial rulings for the whole body of students and masters, the statutes turned specifically to the theologians.

As to the status of the theologians, we decree that no one shall lecture at Paris before his thirty-fifth year and unless he has studied for eight years at least, and has heard the books faithfully and in classrooms, and has attended lectures in theology for five years before he gives lectures himself publicly. And none of these shall lecture before the third hour on days when masters lecture. No one

[23] *University Records*, no. 15, p. 29.

shall be admitted at Paris to formal lectures or to preachings unless he shall be of approved life and science. No one shall be a scholar at Paris who has no definite master.[24]

This section thus established a minimum age and length of study for those wishing to become masters of theology. It then settled a timetabling issue that was of fundamental importance to the smooth running of the university. Many masters of arts were also students and bachelors in the faculty of theology, so they had to be able to teach classes in arts and attend classes in theology. The statutes ruled that theology lectures had to be given after 9.00 a.m., which meant that masters of arts could teach earlier in the day before pursuing their studies in theology.[25] Two basic principles for admission to the faculty were then articulated. The first presumably applied to both masters and students: the faculty would only admit men whose virtue and learning had been found satisfactory. The second stated that every student had to be attached to a particular master, an issue that had already been touched upon with regard to the whole university. Finally, Robert of Courson declared that all who deliberately broke these rules were to be excommunicated 'unless within fifteen days of the offense they have taken care to emend their presumption before the university of masters and scholars or other persons constituted by the university'.[26]

The statutes gave papal recognition to the students and masters of Paris as a legal corporation while also expressing a complex sense of identity. By defining their privileges and regulating their activities, the statutes not only recognized the solidarity of the students and masters as a single body, but also articulated relations between various parts of the university and between the university and others, especially the chancellor and the townspeople. As already noted, however, the way in which they did this is confusing to modern readers because the overall shape of the document is unclear. Individual sections treat in quick succession issues that would seem to be unconnected. The same issues crop up in several places. Some matters are handled with considerable brevity, to the point of seeming cryptic. Hugely significant privileges and rules are treated on a par with relatively minor matters. Having set out rules for dress, funerals and lectures, the statutes declare that the students and masters can make their own rules on just these points. It has been suggested that the statutes lack order because there was

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
[25] Ferruolo, 'The Paris statutes of 1215 reconsidered', p. 8; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, p. 307.
[26] *University Records*, no. 15, p. 30.

very little time in which to consult colleagues and put the document together.[27] This explanation does not seem entirely convincing when historians have so little difficulty recasting the material under a series of thematic headings: governance, town–gown relations, conduct and so on. If Robert and his former colleagues had wanted to do this, it would not have been beyond them to recast the material as efficiently as historians do when they offer thematically structured accounts of the statutes. It may therefore be that the conceptual frameworks that seem obvious to modern academics were either not so readily apparent in 1215 or were not thought desirable.

At this point it is worth recalling two aspects of the monastic critique of the twelfth-century schools. Monks like Bernard of Clairvaux and William of Saint Thierry had insisted that life and learning were intimately connected, that a man had to live virtuously if he were to think correctly, and that meaningful scholarship could only take place within a properly regulated environment. Moreover, a master had to take responsibility for his audience, only teaching those who had undergone the necessary intellectual and moral formation. The statutes clearly sought to regulate the moral behaviour of students and masters, and to establish a formal bond between each master and his students. These regulations were not just about maintaining order, although they were certainly about that. Much more importantly, they were designed to instil the virtues necessary for good learning and to ensure the proper relationship between master and audience. Rules about conduct and behaviour were therefore interspersed with rules about, for example, curriculum precisely because life and learning were understood to be linked. Due weight must also be given to the moral significance of those rules that are not obviously about virtuous behaviour. One of the most commonly condemned manifestations of pride, for example, was the tendency to move on too quickly from one area of study to another. The statutes tackled this when setting minimum ages and periods of study for those who wished to become masters. One of the most frequently identified manifestations of the vice of curiosity was the tendency not to move on from one area of study to another, for example the inclination to carry on studying logic for its own sake rather than moving on to apply logical skills in theology. The timetabling regulations did everything possible to make it easy for arts masters to study theology. The point has been made that the statutes responded to many

[27] Ferruolo, The Paris statutes of 1215 reconsidered', p. 7; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, p. 305.

of the criticisms that had been directed at the schools.[28] More than that, they were built around the idea that intellectual and moral formation were inseparable, and that masters had to be responsible for their effect on their audience. In other words, the public vision of the university, the one authorized by the papacy, was fundamentally shaped by key monastic ideals.

This marked a hugely significant change in the intellectual culture of western Europe. It was not that students and masters henceforth lived and behaved like monks: they did not. At a theoretical level, however, universities were no longer vulnerable to the kind of criticism that had been leveled at the schools in the twelfth century. Actual departures from the ideals articulated in the statutes could be treated as disciplinary issues rather than matters of principle. Virtuous scholars, on the other hand, might be compared to monks. As Rutebeuf, the thirteenth-century vernacular poet, observed, 'To one who should wish to live uprightly is there any life so pleasant as is that of true scholars? ... They can not allow themselves to sit long enough at the table. Their life is as well governed as that of any monastic order.'[29] Universities were ideologically safe from the point of view of those who lived according to a religious rule, and they could now seek to be involved. The arrival of the friars will be considered shortly. In 1237 the general chapter of the Cistercian order authorized the foundation of a Cistercian house in Paris, and in 1256 Guy de l'Aumône became the first Cistercian master of theology at Paris.[30]

The university had now received privileges from the king in 1200 and the pope in 1215, but its standing was by no means secure. The bishop of Paris and his chancellor simply did not accept the corporate independence of the students and masters. At one point they excommunicated

[28] Ferruolo perceptively noted that 'despite their disorder and lack of any apparent unifying principle, the statutes of 1215 succeeded in addressing many of the principal criticisms which had been made of the schools during their previous decades of rapid growth and expansion'; 'The Paris statutes of 1215 reconsidered', p. 7 and see also pp. 7–11. See also Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, pp. 306, 309–312.

[29] M. M. Wood, *The Spirit of Protest in Old French Literature* (New York, 1917), p. 120, n. 2.

[30] P. Dautrey, 'Croissance et adaptation chez les cisterciens au treizième siècle: les débuts du collège des Bernadins de Paris', *Analecta Cisterciensia* 32 (1976): 122–215; F. E. Kwanten, 'Le Collège Saint-Bernard à Paris: Sa fondation et ses débuts', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 43 (1948): 443–72 ; C. H. Lawrence, 'Stephen of Lexington and Cistercian university studies in the thirteenth century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 11 (1960): 164–78; I. P. Wei, 'Guy de l'Aumône's "Summa de diversis questionibus theologiae"', *Traditio* 44 (1988): 275–323 at 275–6. For the dates at which other religious orders founded houses of study in Paris, see T. Sullivan, 'The *quodlibeta* of the canons regular and the monks', in C. Schabel (ed.), *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Fourteenth Century* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 359–400 at 359.

the whole university on the grounds that it had contravened an earlier ordinance against conspiracies by making constitutions without the consent of the bishop, chapter or chancellor, even though this was just what the 1215 statutes had said they could do. The university had to call repeatedly for papal intervention, and a bull of 1219 insisted that the university could not be excommunicated as a whole without papal permission.[31] Matters came to a head, and the university all but disintegrated, in 1229. The crisis began in a tavern in the Rue Saint Marcel with yet another argument over a bill. This led to a series of increasingly violent clashes. Complaints were made to the bishop and the papal legate, Romano, cardinal of Saint Angelo. Romano had himself suffered from scholarly mob violence in 1225 when he had broken the university's seal and banned the university from making another one. This was one of the few issues on which the pope had backed the local ecclesiastical authorities against the university, which only received the right to have a seal in 1246. Possession of a seal was, however, of great symbolic importance for any corporate body. In reprisal for breaking their seal, a crowd of armed students and masters had attacked Romano's residence and only dispersed when royal troops came to his rescue.[32] Unsurprisingly, the papal legate was as keen as the bishop to act against violent scholars. They turned to Louis IX's regent, Blanche of Castille, for action. She sent in the provost and his men who killed several students, some of whom had apparently not been involved in the previous disorder. The masters suspended their lectures, but their complaints to the bishop and legate fell on deaf ears. They therefore announced that if they did not receive satisfaction within a month from Easter no one would be allowed to study or teach in the city or diocese of Paris for the next six years, nor would they return after that period of time unless their grievances were adequately addressed. The regent, the bishop and the papal legate remained unmoved, and so the majority of students and masters departed in what is often called the 'great dispersion', pursuing their studies in a range of other cities in western Europe.[33]

[31] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, nos. 30, 31, pp. 87–90; no. 45, pp. 102–4. Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, p. 29; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 310–11. Pedersen, *The First Universities*, p. 171.

[32] Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, p. 91; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, p. 30; Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas*, pp. 299–303; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, p. 317; Young, '"Consilio hominum nostrorum"', pp. 6–7.

[33] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 62, p. 118; no. 64, p. 119. Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, pp. 92–3; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, p. 31; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, p. 172; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 334–7; Young, '"Consilio hominum nostrorum"', pp. 7–8.

Mobility was one of the most powerful weapons that the students and masters could wield.[34] Once it became clear that they had not made an idle threat, the authorities started to take action. In August 1229 Louis IX confirmed the privileges granted by Philip Augustus in 1200.[35] Pope Gregory IX went into overdrive, reproaching the bishop of Paris for letting matters get out of hand, recalling his legate, ordering the bishops of Le Mans and Senlis and the archdeacon of Châlons sur Marne to act as judges in what he termed the dispute between the king and the students and masters, exhorting the king and the queen mother to recall the scholars and give them justice, reassuring the departed scholars that the matter was being investigated in full, and eventually summoning the bishop of Paris, William of Auvergne, and his chancellor, Philip, to see him in person.[36] It took two years to sort everything out, and the university resumed its teaching in 1231. In April and May of that year, Gregory IX issued a series of bulls establishing order, the most important of which was *Parens scientiarum*, 'Parent of sciences'.[37]

Unlike the statutes of 1215, *Parens scientiarum* was a carefully crafted and brilliantly assured piece of writing. The grand opening, however, has generally been ignored, perhaps because the standard edition in Denifle and Chatelain's *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* fails to identify the authoritative sources embedded within it and upon which it is modelled.[38] This is unfortunate because it made a powerful claim to authority, and set out the heart of Gregory IX's message.

Parens scientiarum Parisius velut altera *Cariath Sepher, civitas litterarum*,[39] cara claret, magna quidem sed de se majora facit optari docentibus et discentibus gratiosa, in qua utique tamquam in officina sapientie speciali *habet argentum venarum suarum principia, et auro locus est in quo rite conflatur*,[40] ex quibus *prudentes eloquii mistici*[41] *murenulas aureas vermiculatas argento*[42] cudentes et fabricantes monilia ornata lapidibus pretiosis, immo nulli pretio comparandis sponsam Christi decorant et decorant. Ibi *ferrum de terra tollitur*,[43] quia dum terrena fragilitas fortitudine solidatur, lorica fidei, gladius spiritus et cetera inde fit christiane militie armatura, potens adversus aereas potestates. Et *lapis calore solutus in es vertitur*,[44] quia corda lapidea Sancti Spiritus afflata fervore dum ardent, incendunt et fiunt predicatione sonora preconantia laudes Christi.

This dense passage is difficult to translate, not least because the final line is open to two possible interpretations that are given as alternatives below.[45]

Paris, parent of sciences, like another *Cariath Sepher, city of letters*, and precious, shines forth. It is great indeed but concerning itself raises hopes for greater things that are pleasing to those who teach and those who learn, where, surely as if in wisdom's special workshop, *there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine*, from which those *prudent in mystical eloquence*, stamping *ornaments of gold, studded with silver*, and making necklaces elaborately, adorn and make beautiful the bride of Christ with precious stones, or rather stones beyond price. There *iron is taken out of the earth*, because when its earthly fragility is solidified by firmness, from it is made the breastplate of faith, the sword of the spirit, and other armour of Christian soldiery, potent against the aerial powers. And *copper is smelted from the ore*, because while stony hearts burn, blown on by the fervour of the Holy Spirit, they take fire ...

a. and are made to proclaim the praises of Christ with resonant preaching. [or/and]
b. and by preaching are made resonant, proclaiming the praises of Christ.[46]

[34] See Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 8–9; I. P. Wei, 'Scholars and travel in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', in P. Horden (ed.), *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages: People, Ideas, Goods* (Donington, 2007), pp. 73–85.

[35] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, nos. 66–7, pp. 120–3. Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, pp. 93–4; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, p. 31; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, p. 172; Young, '"Consilio hominum nostrorum"', p. 8.

[36] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, nos. 69–71, pp. 125–9; no. 75, pp. 133–4. Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, p. 94; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, p. 31; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, p. 337. Given the confusion in a number of accounts, it should be noted that Philip the Chancellor and Philippe de Grève were different people; see N. Wicki, 'Introduction', in *Philippi Cancellarii Parisiensis Summa de Bono*, ed. N. Wicki (Bern, 1985), pp. 11*–13*.

[37] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, nos. 79–95, pp. 136–47. Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 337–40.

[38] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 79, pp. 136–9. The relevant sources are not identified in *Les Registres de Grégoire IX*, ed. L. Auvray, 4 vols. (Paris, 1896–1955), vol. 1, no. 607, cols. 385–8. Verger, however, referred to 'l'extraordinaire préambule' and noted 'les images bibliques', in 'A propos de la naissance de l'université de Paris', p. 83.

[39] Joshua 15.15. Judges 1.11. Cariath Sepher was regarded as a place where many races came together, and comparisons with Paris were therefore drawn; see B. Smalley, 'Studies on the Commentaries of Cardinal Stephen Langton (part II)', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 5 (1930): 152–82 at 164.

[40] Job 28.1.

[41] Rupert of Deutz, *De Gloria et Honore Filii Hominis Super Mattheum*, ed. H. Haacke, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 29 (Turnhout, 1979), book 3, p. 72.

[42] Song of Songs 1.10.

[43] Job 28.2. [44] Job 28.2.

[45] Modern translations differ at various points in the passage. Although I have not followed him entirely, I owe a debt to Thorndike, *University Records*, no. 19, p. 36. I am especially grateful, however, to Professor Gillian Clark and Professor David d'Avray for their learned and generous advice on the meaning of this passage.

[46] In version a, 'sonora' is taken to be ablative singular with 'praedicatione'. This is how Thorndike reads the line, offering 'while stony hearts flame with the fervour of the Holy Spirit, they take fire and are made to herald praises of Christ in sounding preaching'. In version b, 'sonora' is understood to be neuter plural referring back to 'corda'.

In a way the message was plainly stated. The university was associated with wisdom, and it was credited with producing precious adornments for the spouse of Christ, in other words the church. It also manufactured the armour and weaponry that the church needed in its fight against evil. The first element of complexity came with the final line. Read one way, those who studied at the university were transformed by the Holy Spirit to become preachers. Read another way, they were transformed by preaching as well as the Holy Spirit. Both readings make grammatical sense, so it is likely that both occurred to contemporaries and were perhaps intended by those responsible for the text. There is therefore a double meaning rather than ambiguity: university scholars were transformed into preachers by preaching.

There was, however, a great deal more to this opening passage. Embedded within it was a string of quotations from the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, Song of Songs, and above all Job. There was also a phrase from a work by Rupert of Deutz. While it is impossible to be certain that it was taken directly from there, Rupert had commented on and deployed several of the passages of the Old Testament quoted in *Parens scientiarum*, so there may be a connection awaiting further explanation.[47] More importantly, there were also verbal echoes of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*, an authoritative work with which many members of the university were bound to be familiar, and upon which the opening passage of the bull clearly drew for its essential themes.[48] In a general sense, this use of authorities enhanced the dignity of the university, and indeed Gregory IX had used biblical texts to bolster the standing of the university in a number of his letters since 1229.[49] More specifically, however, two messages were driven home.

First, *Parens scientiarum* clearly gestured towards the monastic view of learning. The opening passage contained a line from the Song of Songs, the text upon which learned monks so often worked. The only

[47] Rupert had commented on Judges 1.11 and Song of Songs 1.10, and used Judges 1.11 and Job 28.1 in commentaries on other biblical texts. See *De Sancta Trinitate et Operibus Eius Libri X–XXVI*, ed. H. Haacke, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 22 (Turnhout, 1972), book 21, pp. 1147–8 (Judges 1.11); *Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum*, ed. H. Haacke, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 26 (Turnhout, 1974), book 1, pp. 28–9 (Song of Songs 1.10) and book 6, pp. 149–50 (Judges 1.12); *De Sancta Trinitate et Operibus Eius Libri I–IX*, ed. H. Haacke, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 21 (Turnhout, 1971), book 5, p. 332 (Job 28.1).

[48] Gregory, *Moralia in Iob Libri XI–XXII*, ed. M. Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 143A, (Turnhout, 1979), 18.26–8, pp. 910–15. S. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, ed. C. Marriott, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1844–7), vol. 2, pp. 343–8.

[49] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, nos. 69–70, pp.125–8; no. 75, pp. 133–4.

'contemporary' writer to be quoted, Rupert of Deutz, was a monk. Much more significantly, however, three quotations were taken from Job 28.1–2, and Gregory the Great's commentary on this passage was highly pertinent. He began his discussion of Job 28.1, 'there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine', by remarking: 'In silver eloquence is customarily designated, in gold brightness of life or of wisdom.'[50] He went on to attack heretics whose pride led them to neglect the sacred books, and to repeat Paul's injunction to avoid 'profane novelties of speaking'.[51] In the context of learning, Gregory's emphasis on the importance of a good life, and his distrust of pride and novelty, had much in common with the monastic critique of the twelfth-century schools. By associating the university with an authoritative expression of this complex of ideas, *Parens scientiarum* stressed the way in which it had taken on board the monastic ideals of learning, and repeated the message conveyed by the 1215 statutes.

Second, *Parens scientiarum* introduced a theme that had been missing from the 1215 statutes: the idea of transformation. Monks like William of Saint Thierry had envisaged radical transformation in their ascents to God, and now transformation re-entered the frame. In a way this was another nod to monastic ways of thinking, except that a very different transformation was envisaged. The university was not directly responsible for transforming the individual soul in its relationship with God. Rather *Parens scientiarum* highlighted a transformation that revolved around preaching. In particular it stressed the way in which the university served the church by turning men into preachers, and Gregory the Great's commentary on Job underpinned this theme too. Commenting on the lines from Job quoted in *Parens scientiarum*, Gregory the Great stressed the importance of the unity of the church and, building on the line 'iron is taken out of the earth' (Job 28.2), deployed martial imagery to advocate the defence of the faith. Above all, he took the theme of transformation from the words of Job and applied them to the process of becoming a preacher.

Ferrum de terra tollitur. Ac si aperte dicat: Fortes uiri qui acutissimis linguarum gladiis in hac acie defendendae fidei ferrum fiunt, aliquando terra in infimis actionibus fuerunt. Peccanti quippe homini dictum est: *Terra es et in terram ibis*. Sed de terra ferrum tollitur, cum fortis propugnator Ecclesiae a terrena quam prius tenuit actione separatur. Non ergo in eo debet despici quicquid

[50] Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, 18.26, p. 910: 'In argento eloquium, in auro uitae uel sapientiae claritas designari solet.' I have preferred my own translation in this instance.

[51] I Timothy 6.20, 'O Timothee, depositum custodi, deuitans profanas uocum nouitates,' as quoted by Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, 18.26, p. 911. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol. 2, p. 344.

fuit, qui iam coepit esse quod non fuit. An non Matthaeus in terra inuentus est, qui terrenis negotiis implicatus telonii usibus seruiebat? Sed de terra tultus, in fortitudine ferri conualuit, cuius uidelicet lingua quasi acutissimo gladio euangelii administratione Dominus infidelium corda transfixit; et qui infirmus prius despectusque fuerat per terrena negotia, fortis postmodum factus est ad caelestia praedicamenta.
Vnde adhuc subiungitur:
Et lapis solutus calore, in aes uertitur. Tunc lapis calore soluitur, cum cor durum atque a diuini amoris igne frigidum eodem diuini amoris igne tangitur, et in feruore spiritus liquatur, ut ad sequentem uitam desideriorum aestu ardeat, quam prius audiens insensibilis manebat. Ex quo ardore scilicet et emollitur ad amorem, et roboratur ad operationem; ut sicut prius durus fuerat in amore saeculi, ita se postmodum fortem exserat in amorem Dei; et quod ante audire renuebat, iam et credere et praedicare incipiat. *Lapis ergo solutus calore, in aes uertitur,* quia dura mens superni amoris igne liquefacta ad ueram fortitudinem commutatur, ut peccator qui prius insensibilis exstiterat, postmodum et per auctoritatem fortis et per praedicationem sonorus fiat.[52]

Iron is taken out of the earth.
As if he said in plain speech: 'men of strength, who by the sharpest swords of their tongues are become iron in this pitched battle of the defending of the faith, were one time but 'earth' in the lowest sphere of actions.' For to man on his sinning it was spoken; *Earth thou art, and unto earth shalt thou return.* But 'iron is taken out of the earth,' when the hardy champion of the Church is separated from an earthly course of conduct, which he before maintained. Accordingly he ought not to be contemned in any thing whatever, that he was, who has already begun to be that which he was not. Was not Matthew found in the earth, who, involved in earthly matters, served the business of the receipt of custom? But having been taken out of the earth, he was strengthened into the forcibleness of iron, in that by his tongue, as by the sharpest sword, the Lord in the enforcing of the Gospel pierced the hearts of unbelievers. And he that before was weak and contemptible by his earthly occupations, was afterwards made strong for heavenly preachings. Hence it is yet further subjoined;
And the stone being melted with heat is turned into brass.
Then is 'the stone dissolved with heat,' when the heart that is hard and cold to the fire of divine love is touched by that same fire of divine love, and melted in the glowing warmth of the Spirit, that to the life that follows it should burn with the heat of its longings, which life on hearing of before, it remained uninfluenced. By the power of which same heat, he is at once softened down to love and invigorated to practice, that as before he was hard in the love of the world, so he should afterwards give himself out strong unto the love of God, and what he declined to give ear to before, he should henceforth begin both to believe and to preach. And so, *the stone being dissolved with heat is turned into*

[52] Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, 18.27–8, p. 914.

brass, because the hardened mind, being melted by the fire of love from Above, is changed to true strength. So that the sinner that was before unmoved should afterwards be made at once strong in respect of authority, and sounding in respect of preaching.[53]

The last line of this passage, 'ut peccator qui prius insensibilis exstiterat, postmodum et per auctoritatem fortis et per praedicationem sonorus fiat', could be deemed to have the same ambiguity or double meaning as *Parens scientiarum*. The translation quoted above, 'So that the sinner that was before unmoved should afterwards be made at once strong in respect of authority, and sounding in respect of preaching', has the sinner transformed into a preacher, but he could also be 'made strong by authority and resonant by preaching'. Earlier in the passage, however, there is no such possibility: 'fortis postmodum factus est ad caelestia praedicamenta' (translated above as 'he ... was afterwards made strong for heavenly preachings') and 'et quod ante audire renuebat, iam et credere et praedicare incipiat' ('and what he declined to give ear to before, he should henceforth begin both to believe and to preach') both clearly indicate a transformation that produces preachers.

The opening passage of *Parens scientiarum* was clearly modelled on Gregory's *Moralia in Job*. Relatively succinct in itself, it thus invoked a much more substantial vision of the way in which men could be changed to become preachers. While true to the statutes of 1215 in its commitment to key monastic ideals, it added a strong statement of the transformative power of the university. Perhaps this emphasis on transformation owed something to monastic culture, but it also marked the university out as very different. *Parens scientiarum* explained that the university's transformative power enabled the university to produce preachers, and thus to assist the church in its pastoral mission. In part this was a response to the particular crisis that the pope had been working to resolve: the friars' refusal to suspend teaching and to disperse from Paris had generated tensions between the friars and the secular masters, and it made sense for the pope to stress their common purpose. But it was also a huge programmatic statement. This was not an isolated expression of the university's obligation to train preachers, and preaching was soon established as an enduring feature of university life. Moreover, the Parisian masters of theology in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries repeatedly asserted their deep commitment to preaching, as a technique by which they would teach their students, as a key aspect of the pastoral work that they would teach their students

[53] Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol. 2, pp. 347–8.

to perform, and as the means by which they and their students would bring about reform of both clergy and laity.[54] The opening of *Parens scientiarum* was the most public expression of their ideal. It also made the point that when people dealt with the students and masters of Paris, they had to realize that they were not dealing with a disorderly mob, whatever the immediate appearances, but with a body of great religious significance.

Parens scientiarum then tackled a series of issues that had caused problems in the past, beginning with the granting of teaching licences by the chancellor. Every chancellor had to take an oath only to grant licences to teach theology and canon law to those who were worthy. To establish whether or not a candidate was worthy, he had, 'in the presence of all masters of theology in the city and other respectable and learned men by whom the truth can be learned', to 'make diligent inquiry as to the life, knowledge, facility, and also the promise and hope of success and other points which are required in such cases'. For their part, masters of theology and canon law had to swear to 'furnish faithful testimony on the aforesaid points'. The chancellor was further bound to observe the confidentiality of these references. Regarding licences in arts and medicine, the chancellor made a similar promise to 'examine the masters in good faith' and 'admit only the deserving'.[55]

Next, the bull recognized the university's status as a legal corporation. They were granted 'the function of making due constitutions or ordinances' regarding a list of issues much like that contained in the 1215 statutes, and 'of duly punishing rebels against those constitutions or ordinances by expulsion from your society'. But Gregory went a step further than the 1215 statutes.

[54] For a wonderfully vivid and detailed account of the masters' engagement with preaching, see N. Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole. La prédication à Paris au XIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1998). For expressions of their commitment, see also J. W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 90–1, 107–16; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, pp. 184–277; P. Glorieux, 'L'enseignement au moyen âge: techniques et méthodes en usage à la faculté de théologie de Paris au xiiie siècle', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 35 (1968): 65–186 at 148–61; J. Leclercq, 'Le magistère du prédicateur au xiiie siècle', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 15 (1946): 105–47, esp. 138–47; J. Longère, *Oeuvres oratoires de maîtres parisiens au xiie siècle: étude historique et doctrinale*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 35–44, 390–8; R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto, 1979): 48–51, 65–87. On the role of the University of Paris in thirteenth-century mendicant preaching, see D. L. d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford, 1985), esp. pp. 132–203.

[55] *University Records*, no. 19, pp. 36–7.

> And if it chance that the rental of lodgings is taken from you or that – which God forbid – injury or enormous excess be inflicted on you or any of you, such as death or mutilation of a limb, unless, after due complaint has been lodged, satisfaction is given within fifteen days, it shall be permitted to you to suspend lectures until condign satisfaction is given. And if any of you shall have been unjustly imprisoned, it shall be right for you, unless the injury ceases when complaint is made, to stop lectures immediately, if it shall seem expedient.[56]

Gregory thus acknowledged their right to strike, officially granting them the power that had been specifically denied in the statutes of 1215, and that had just proved so effective.

The way in which the bishop of Paris exercised his jurisdiction had caused many problems, and the bull now turned to this thorny matter. The bishop of Paris was ordered to punish wrongdoers in a manner such that 'the honour of the scholars is preserved and crimes do not remain unpunished'. Any scholar arrested on 'probable suspicion' had to be granted bail. If a scholar had to be incarcerated, it had to be in the bishop's prison because the chancellor was forbidden to have a prison. No scholar was to be arrested for debt. There was to be no charge for lifting a ban of excommunication. Returning to the licence to teach, the chancellor was not to exact any kind of oath or payment in return for the licence.[57] The bull made it clear, however, that the university had a responsibility to maintain order amongst its members. The summer vacation was not to last for more than a month, and bachelors were permitted to continue lecturing in that time. Scholars were not to bear arms in the town, and the university was not to defend 'disturbers of the peace and of studies'. Scholarly privileges were not to be accorded to men who pretended to be scholars but did not in fact go to classes or acknowledge any master.[58] In short, the university had to do its part to prevent rowdy behaviour escalating into a crisis, and to ensure that it did not inadvertently protect young men who were not studying at all. Doubtless this part of the bull addressed some of the concerns of the bishop, king and townspeople.

The bull then turned to the curriculum. It did not attempt to set out complete programmes of study for each subject; full regulations about what was to be studied, and how long was to be spent at each stage, were drawn up and frequently revised within the various faculties during the thirteenth century.[59] Two instructions were, however, given to masters

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 37. [57] *Ibid.*, pp. 37–8. [58] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[59] For an excellent summary of a student's career, see J. Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350)* (London, 1987, repr. 1996), pp. 20–4.

of arts. The first concerned the set texts to be used in ordinary lectures on grammar. The second offered the prospect that the ban on teaching Aristotelian natural philosophy might soon be relaxed: the prohibited books were not to be used until they had been 'examined and purged from all suspicion of errors', a task that was never in fact accomplished by the committee that Gregory subsequently established.[60] For those studying and teaching theology, a major issue was addressed. They were to 'strive to exercise themselves praiseworthily in the faculty which they profess and not show themselves philosophers but endeavour to know God' and to 'dispute in the schools concerning those questions only which can be settled by theological works and the treatises of the holy fathers'.[61] This was an attempt to define the subject matter and methods appropriate for study in the faculty of theology, and Gregory IX had already made his point to the masters of theology in a letter of 1228.[62]

There followed a section concerning the property of scholars who died without leaving a will. The bull established procedures for notifying the heirs and giving them the opportunity to claim the property, otherwise it was to be used for the benefit of the deceased's soul.[63] Finally, the bull called on the king to respect the privileges of the masters and students, and to fine those who wronged them. In making this point, the bull returned to its opening theme. The masters and students who had been wronged and who had left the university seemed 'to have pled not so much their own case as the common cause'. The pope gave his orders to the king 'with the general need and utility of the church in view'.[64] The university's privileges had to be respected because of its value to the whole church.

Having examined Philip Augustus' charter of 1200, the statutes of 1215, and *Parens scientiarum*, and the circumstances in which these documents were produced, it is clear that the students and masters of Paris were frequently treated as a single community, and that they were capable of collective action. More than that, the masters were recognized as

[60] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 87, pp. 143–4. For perceptive analysis of Gregory IX's intentions on this point, and the long-term significance of his actions, see L. Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle à l'université de Paris (XIIIe–XIVe siècles)* (Paris, 1999), pp. 103–16; L. Bianchi, 'Aristotle as a captive bride: notes on Gregory IX's attitude towards Aristotelianism', in L. Honnefelder, R. Wood, M. Dreyer and M.-A. Aris (eds.), *Albertus Magnus und die Anfänge der Aristoteles-Rezeption im lateinischen Mittelalter: Von Richardis Rufus bis zu Franciscus de Mayronis, Albertus Magnus and the Beginnings of the Medieval Reception of Aristotle in the Latin West: From Richardus Rufus to Franciscus de Mayronis* (Münster, 2005), pp. 777–94.

[61] *University Records*, no. 19, p. 38.

[62] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 59, pp. 114–16.

[63] *University Records*, no. 19, pp. 38–9.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

a legal corporation and exercised their powers accordingly. Within the university as a whole, there were groups studying and teaching the arts, theology, canon law and medicine.[65] Each student was also attached to a particular master. This does not, however, constitute a full picture of the way the university was developing, and it is important to grasp its rapidly growing complexity.

Most strikingly, the documents considered thus far made no mention of the nations that were emerging in the first decades of the thirteenth century. The masters of arts divided themselves into four nations, with arts students gaining affiliation by association with their masters. Exactly when and how this took place is not known: the earliest reference to the nations dates from 1222 and there is firm evidence for a well-developed system by 1249, but their composition and structure continued to evolve in the course of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The four nations were France, Picardy, Normandy and England. Each was a very rough and somewhat arbitrary geographical grouping. Thus by the early fourteenth century the French nation consisted of masters not only from the Ile de France but also from the south of France, Spain, Italy, Greece and the East. The masters of the Picard nation came from the north of France and the Low Countries. The Norman nation was made up of masters from Normandy and Brittany. The English nation included not only English masters but masters from Germany and elsewhere in northern and eastern Europe. Each nation was a distinct and largely autonomous corporation, with its own assembly, seal, statutes, financial arrangements, records and elected officials. Each nation elected a proctor who summoned and chaired the assembly, and carried out key administrative and disciplinary functions. The system was highly democratic in that proctors were entirely subject to their assemblies and held office for no more than a month or six weeks. Together the nations constituted the faculty of arts whose rector was elected by the proctors or four other representatives chosen by the nations. The rector's period of office was also limited to a month or six weeks until it was extended to three months in 1266. The nations were responsible for organizing the teaching in the arts faculty. They maintained the schools in which the arts students were taught, mostly on the Rue du Fouarre, or 'street of straw', so named because of the straw on which the students sat. They allocated teaching space to the masters,

[65] There was no formal teaching of Roman law because its study in Paris had been prohibited in 1219 by Pope Honorius III, who wished to ensure that the theologians' pre-eminence in Paris remained unchallenged. See *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 32, pp. 90–3.

collected fees from the students, and organized payment of the masters. Students were not, however, obliged to attend the schools of their own nation. Many other aspects of life also revolved around the nations. Each nation employed messengers, termed *nuntii volantes* or 'flying messengers', who travelled between Paris and the lands from which the scholars came, bearing letters, property and money. Eventually they also established arrangements with bankers and merchants in Paris, called *nuntii maiores* or 'greater messengers', who provided banking services for the masters and students of the nation, arranging the transfer of funds from their families in the territories of the nation, changing money and making loans. The nations also provided the focus for the religious life of their members. The nations celebrated their own patron saints. By the fourteenth century, and probably earlier, the nations made payments to their masters for attending masses and fined them if they failed to turn up. Unsurprisingly, many masters and students felt an overwhelming sense of loyalty to their nation. Throughout the thirteenth century there were conflicts between the nations, some of them extremely violent. They were usually caused by arguments about which nation a particular master should join, disputes over the election of the rector, or the French nation's resentment that it had no more power than each of the other nations even though it had many more members. In many respects the nations shaped the everyday lives of the majority of masters and students in the university.[66]

The faculty of arts developed at the same time as the nations of which it was composed. Its status as a legal corporation with an elected rector at its head was well established by the middle of the thirteenth century. The masters teaching theology, canon law and medicine remained informal groupings until the second half of the century when they too produced written statutes, acquired seals and elected officers, including deans to preside over them. It is impossible to offer statistical analysis of the university in the thirteenth century for lack of evidence; there are, for example, no matriculation records. Nevertheless, it is clear that the faculty of arts was far larger than the others. Taking students and masters together, it has been estimated that the faculty of arts made up about two-thirds of the university. As far as masters were concerned,

[66] Cobban, *Medieval Universities*, pp. 87–90; A. Gieysztot, 'Management and resources', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 108–43 at 114–16; Kibre, *Nations*, pp. 14–28, 65–115; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 51–60; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 194–5; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 311–20, 408, 414–15, 420–1; H. de Ridder-Symoens, 'Mobility', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 280–304 at 282–5; R. C. Schwinges, 'Student education, student life', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 195–243 at 211.

there were probably never more than ten to sixteen in any one of the higher faculties at any one time, whereas there were probably well over a hundred arts masters. Perhaps because the faculty of arts was so much larger, and perhaps also because the other faculties developed so much later, the rector, the elected head of the faculty of arts, came increasingly to act as the head of the university as a whole. By the end of the thirteenth century, all four faculties were well established as independent corporations. There was, however, a measure of interpenetration. As already mentioned, many students and bachelors in the higher faculties were also masters of arts, and until they became masters in these higher faculties they remained members of their nations in the faculty of arts, at once subject to their jurisdiction and active participants in their governmental processes. Furthermore, students in the faculty of arts had to take an oath of obedience before they could become bachelors. In the developed form of this oath, they had to swear obedience to the rector, whatever their future position might be. Many of the secular masters in the higher faculties, as well as many of the students and bachelors, were therefore bound to the rector by this oath. The federal structure of the university was most strikingly revealed at its general assembly or congregation. It was composed of all the regent masters, chaired by the rector. When a matter required discussion, each nation of the faculty of arts and each of the higher faculties considered the matter separately. Their views were reported by their proctors or deans. The four nations and the three higher faculties cast one vote each, and the decision was carried by the majority of these seven votes.[67]

Within and sometimes cutting across the structure of faculties and nations, were a growing number of colleges. The earliest were charitable foundations, developed from or modelled on hospitals, and providing little more than basic accommodation and a small financial grant for a limited number of poor scholars. The first, which became known as the Collège des Dix-Huit, was set up in 1180 by an Englishman, Jocius of London, on his way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He visited the Hospital of the blessed Mary of Paris, and saw within it a room customarily occupied by poor clerks. Acting on the advice of the dean and chancellor of Paris, he purchased the room for the accommodation of

[67] Brundage, *Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, pp. 246–7; Cobban, *Medieval Universities*, pp. 84–6; Gieysztor, 'Management and resources', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 109–13; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 52, 60–7; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 191–4, 196–8, 200–4; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, 321–34, 408–14; N. Siraisi, 'The faculty of medicine', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 360–87 at 367–8; Verger, 'Patterns', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 38, 52.

eighteen scholars who would also receive a monthly payment from the alms given to the hospital. In return, the scholars were obliged only to participate in the funerary rituals of those who died in the house and to say nightly prayers. Other colleges were soon established. Some of them admitted only scholars studying a particular subject. Thus the Collège de Sorbonne, founded around 1257 by the theologian Robert of Sorbon with the active support of Louis IX, provided initially for sixteen theology students, four from each nation, and later for a total of thirty-six. Other colleges only admitted scholars from a particular region. The College of the Treasurer, for example, was founded in 1268 to house and support twelve students of theology and twelve of the arts, all to be 'chosen, when the need arises, by the two archdeacons of Grand-Caux and Petit-Caux', and all to originate 'from Grand-Caux and Petit-Caux, if in those two places they find sufficient and fit persons, or if not in the two Caux, at least from the whole diocese of Rouen'.[68] Some of these later colleges were highly complex institutions. The Sorbonne in particular regulated the lives of its members in great detail and required them all to participate in its internal management by holding various offices in turn. It also gave a great deal of support to their studies, providing an excellent library and even running special classes for extra revision and practice. The overwhelming majority of students rented houses in groups, boarded with masters, or lodged with townspeople, but for a few the colleges provided essential material support and in some cases even dominated their domestic and scholarly routines.[69]

A much more challenging degree of complexity was presented by the growing involvement of the friars and other religious orders within the university.[70] The friars included some of the university's most outstanding theologians, but also threatened the means by which the emerging university was asserting its autonomy. Both the Franciscan and the Dominican orders expanded dramatically in the first two decades of the thirteenth century, espousing voluntary poverty and undertaking a universal preaching mission. Right from the start, the Dominicans valued learning and set out to establish themselves in Paris and Bologna. They developed a hierarchical system of schools within the order, with the best students ending up at one of their top schools. Unlike Dominic, Francis had not himself set much store by formal learning, and the Franciscans were much slower to establish a system of education. Before long, however, they too were active as scholars in Paris. Neither order permitted its members to study or teach in the faculty of arts; they came to Paris to study theology. The rest of the university made them welcome, and friars were taught by secular masters of theology. The Dominicans received the house of Saint Jacques and associated rights partly from Jean de Barastre, a secular master of theology who had been asked to teach in their school by Pope Honorius III, and partly from the university as a whole. The Franciscans set up a new convent, the Grand Couvent des Cordeliers, with financial assistance from the king. The friars were not, however, fully tied into the emerging structure of the university. Unless a friar had been a master of arts before converting, for example, he had not taken the oath to obey the statutes of the university that masters of arts took upon inception. As the university's structure emerged, and as the university acted to assert its privileges, such anomalies began to matter. A critical point was reached when the university went on strike in 1229: the friars refused to suspend their studies, and even opened their schools to secular students who wished to continue their studies in Paris. Moreover, Roland of Cremona was granted the first Dominican chair in theology. After the masters and students returned in 1231, the Dominicans kept their chair and the mendicant schools remained open to secular students. Tension mounted thereafter not only because the friars clearly could not be relied upon to support a strike, but also because their success was damaging the careers of the secular masters. The friars were attracting growing numbers of students, thus reducing the income received by the secular masters of theology. Moreover, by converting secular masters of theology, the friars gained more chairs. In 1231 Alexander of Hales entered the Franciscan order to become the first Franciscan master of theology at Paris. Around the same time John of Saint Giles dramatically took the habit of the Dominicans in the middle of a sermon, thus creating a second Dominican chair of theology. It is not known exactly how professorial succession functioned, but it was clearly accepted that

[68] *University Records*, no. 36, p. 76.

[69] A. B. Cobban, 'The role of colleges in the medieval universities of northern Europe, with special reference to France and England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 71 (1989): 49–70 at 51–3; Gieysztor, 'Management and resources', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 116–19; P. Glorieux, *Les Origines du Collège de Sorbonne* (Notre Dame, IN, 1959), pp. 17–23; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 226–9; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 497–511; Schwinges, 'Student education, student life', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, p. 214. See also *Chartularium*, vol. 1, pars introductoria, no. 50, pp. 49–50; no. 448, pp. 505–14; *University Records*, no. 10, pp. 21–2; no. 42, pp. 88–98.

[70] The following account is based on: Cobban, *Medieval Universities*, pp. 91–4; Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, pp. 103–18; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 34–47; P. R. McKeon, 'The status of the university of Paris as *Parens Scientiarum*: an episode in the development of its autonomy', *Speculum* 39 (1964): 651–75; Mulchahey, *'First the bow is bent'*, pp. 362–4; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 173–82; Rashdall, *Universities*, vol. 1, pp. 370–97; B. Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education (c. 1210–1517)* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 1–21, 53–8; A. G. Traver, 'Rewriting history? The Parisian secular masters' *Apologia* of 1254', *History of Universities* 15 (1997–9): 9–45.

when a chair fell vacant it passed to a master from the same order. When secular masters converted, they therefore reduced the number of chairs available for secular scholars, thus damaging their career opportunities.

The resentment felt by the secular scholars was soon combined with the sense of grievance held more widely by the secular clergy whose authority and income were diminished when friars, backed by successive popes, preached, heard confession and received pious donations from the laity. Longstanding resentment turned into bitter conflict during the 1250s. Apparently the friars deemed it inappropriate to ask for magisterial status, and the chancellor in 1250 effectively excluded them by only granting a teaching licence if petition were made. Pope Innocent IV ordered the chancellor to grant the licence to any member of a religious order whom he considered to be qualified, whether or not a request had been made. In 1252 the secular masters of theology passed a statute according to which a member of a religious order could only be admitted if his order had a college in Paris, and each college could only have one chair in theology, which threatened the second Dominican chair. At Lent in 1253 disorder in the streets resulted in the provost's men killing one scholar and arresting others. The university suspended studies until justice was done, but the mendicant masters refused to join the strike, seriously undermining its effect. When the university required all masters to take an oath to act together to obtain justice, the friars again refused and were expelled from the university. In April 1253, the university passed a statute obliging all masters to take an oath to obey the statutes and to go on strike when instructed by the university. The Franciscans eventually agreed, but the Dominicans did not. The Dominican masters were therefore not only expelled but also excommunicated. The Dominicans appealed to Innocent IV, who lifted the ban of excommunication and instructed the university to readmit the Dominicans. The university did not comply, however, and in 1254 it aired its complaints in a letter addressed to all the prelates and scholars in Christendom. The general resentment of the friars seemed to be having an effect when Innocent IV issued the bull *Etsi animarum*, withdrawing the privileges of the friars with regard to preaching and hearing confession. But Innocent died in December 1254, to be succeeded by Alexander IV who backed the friars in all respects. In April 1255 he came down hard on the University of Paris with the bull *Quasi lignum vitae*. In it he ordered the reinstatement of the Dominican masters. He instructed the chancellor to grant the teaching licence to as many qualified candidates as he saw fit, thus removing the limit that had been placed on the number of masters

from religious orders. Finally, he ruled that studies could only be suspended when such action had the support of two-thirds of the masters in each faculty, which, because of their numbers in the faculty of theology, ensured that the friars and the other religious orders could prevent the university going on strike. When the university refused to obey, all the masters and scholars were excommunicated. They responded by announcing the dissolution of the university and giving up all privileges that had been granted to it, so that there was now no body to which the friars could be readmitted.

The escalating conflict was accompanied by a polemical battle of increasing bitterness. Secular masters attacked the ideals of voluntary poverty that underpinned the mendicant orders. They also sought the condemnation of the *Liber introductorius in evangelium aeternum* ('Introduction to the Eternal Gospel'), a work written by a Franciscan studying in Paris called Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, in which he built on the apocalyptic theories of Joachim of Fiore to argue that the Bible had been superseded by the works of Joachim and the clergy by the friars. The most vocal secular master was William of Saint Amour, whose *De periculis novissimorum temporum* ('On the Perils of the Last Times') was condemned by the pope in 1256. During the second half of the decade, the secular masters were worn down by constant papal pressure, one after the other accepting the terms of *Quasi lignum vitae* and seeking absolution. The founding of the College of the Sorbonne was probably a constructive attempt to address the anxieties of the secular theologians in a manner that would not lead to more conflict. After Alexander IV's death in 1261, his successor, Urban IV, adopted a much more conciliatory attitude, confirming the privileges of the university. It was apparently accepted that the Dominicans should have two regent masters of theology, while the other religious orders could only have one. This was, however, a very uneasy compromise, no more stable than before the open conflicts of the 1250s. Those conflicts had brought about one very significant shift: the university had previously received almost unqualified papal backing in its struggles to be free of episcopal authority, but now the secular masters and students had been on the wrong end of papal authority, while establishing common cause with secular bishops and clergy in their opposition to the friars. The university's role in ecclesiastical politics was never again to be as straightforward as it had been in the first half of the thirteenth century. Moreover, the tensions between the secular members of the university and the friars remained, and were to flare up on many future occasions. It was impossible to escape from the problems caused by the friars and members of other religious orders who wished to be part of the

university and yet to retain their identity as members of wider religious communities.

The secular students and masters were not, however, 'pure' members of the university, unconnected with the wider world. On the contrary, their need for financial support constantly reminded them of the groups to which they belonged or with which they were associated outside the university. The cost of university education was high, and probably increased from the middle of the thirteenth century. Many scholars depended on their families for money and material assistance. Most were from lesser noble families or the wealthy urban classes. Great noble families rarely sent their sons to university until much later. Few from the peasantry or the poorer urban classes could find the means to attend university, and even fewer could stay at university for long enough to become masters in the higher faculties, though there were some striking exceptions. Model letters reflect the way in which scholars found it necessary to seek assistance from their parents, siblings and clerical uncles. Another source of income was the holding of ecclesiastical benefices. A scholar might be permitted to employ another cleric to do the work while he himself was non-resident because he was at university. He paid less than the income he received, and kept the difference for himself. It is not known how many students and masters were funded in this way, but successive popes strongly encouraged the practice. In 1219, for example, Honorius III issued the bull *Super speculam*, permitting clerics to be non-resident for five years while studying theology at Paris, a privilege that was soon applied to other universities. Many popes granted benefices to individuals so that they might continue their studies, though whether or not an individual actually received his benefice depended on the local bishop's readiness to comply with papal wishes. Popes were even prepared to allow some scholars to hold more than one benefice at the same time, a financial necessity if the income from a single benefice was insufficient. From the early fourteenth century, universities regularly sent the pope ranked lists, or rolls (*rotuli*), of candidates for benefices. This funding mechanism was used to support not only theologians, but also men studying the arts and canon law. Many scholars therefore held offices in churches outside Paris and, despite their non-residence, were drawn into the local politics of the communities of which they were now members. Financial support was also provided by wealthy patrons. Royal backing could be very generous. While Henry III of England directed most of his educational patronage to Oxford, he nevertheless gave money to several Parisian students. At the end of the thirteenth century, Philip IV of France made systematic payments to scholars at Paris, as well as to two

colleges, and it may be that this practice had begun earlier in the century. Other patrons included nobles, high-ranking churchmen, prominent townspeople and rich academics. Sometimes they simply funded individuals for a period of time. On occasion, however, especially in their wills, they established 'flying scholarships', or *bursae volantes*. Income from property or invested capital was used to provide grants to scholars, termed 'flying scholarships' because the holder did not have to live in a specific college. Usually, however, certain conditions had to be met: these might include coming from a particular area, attending a specific university, studying a particular subject, being studious or being poor. Financial management and responsibility for selecting holders was generally placed in the hands of the founder's family or representatives of an ecclesiastical institution. To give just one example, in her will of 1273 Margaret, countess of Flanders and Hainaut, left £300 from which the annual income was to be given to students from Flanders and Hainaut studying at Paris as chosen by either the chancellor of Paris, the Dominican prior, a representative of the Franciscans, or by two of these three. While patrons may have been primarily motivated by charity, the recipients of their generosity were bound to feel informal ties of obligation and to be drawn into the political, regional or ecclesiastical networks through which patronage operated.[71]

There was another important respect in which students and masters looked beyond the university to a wider world: very few scholars spent their entire lives at university. Most students studied for only a few years, with no intention of 'completing' the formal course. Only a tiny minority went on to teach as masters, and many masters left after a brief spell as regents, often the minimum required by the statutes. A relatively small number of secular masters of theology spent their whole

[71] J. W. Baldwin, 'Masters at Paris from 1179 to 1215: a social perspective', in R. L. Benson and G. Constable (eds.), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 138–72 at 150–1; J. Dunbabin, 'Meeting the costs of university education in northern France, *c.* 1240–*c.* 1340', *History of Universities* 10 (1991): 1–27; C. H. Haskins, 'The life of mediaeval students as illustrated by their letters', in *Studies in Mediaeval Culture* (Oxford, 1929), pp. 1–35, as revised and expanded from *American Historical Review* 3 (1898): 203–29; Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 67–8; J. Paquet, 'Coût des études, pauvreté et labeur: fonctions et métiers d'étudiants au moyen âge', *History of Universities* 2 (1982): 15–52; Pedersen, *The First Universities*, pp. 216–21; F. Pegues, 'Royal support of students in the thirteenth century', *Speculum* 31 (1956): 454–62; F. Pegues, 'Ecclesiastical provisions for the support of students in the thirteenth century', *Church History* 26 (1957): 307–18; Schwinges, 'Student education, student life', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 240–1; P. Trio, 'Financing of university students in the middle ages: a new orientation', *History of Universities* 4 (1984): 1–24; J. Verger, 'Teachers', in Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Universities in the Middle Ages*, pp. 144–68 at 151.

careers as regent masters. Otherwise, even those who enjoyed substantial teaching careers usually departed well before the end of their working lives. Some went to take up teaching posts elsewhere, but increasing numbers worked in secular and ecclesiastical government. Masters had extremely good career prospects in the church, many becoming prelates, and others taking up positions in cathedral chapters. The French and English kings also employed increasing numbers of men who could claim the title of 'master', with the English kings using them in far greater numbers for most of the thirteenth century. It is much harder to track the careers of those who did not become masters, but there is little doubt that many of them staffed the growing bureaucracies of ecclesiastical and secular government.[72] In some cases this basic career pattern has made it possible for historians to explore the role of ideas in politics by studying both the academic work of individual scholars and their subsequent actions in high office.[73] It also meant that the university had a substantial number of alumni, some of whom were very powerful men. In the fourteenth century there were occasions when the university tried to force such men to act in the university's interests by reminding them of oaths they had taken to uphold the university's privileges and statutes, and charging them with perjury when they did not take the steps required of them.[74] No such case is known in the thirteenth century, but there were frequent contacts between the university and its former members, and occasions when the latter looked to the university for support. In the 1280s bitter conflict again broke out between the secular clergy of France and the friars. The secular clergy maintained that, despite papal privileges permitting friars to preach and hear confession without authorization from the local clergy, all members of the church were still bound to confess all their sins to their own

[72] R. Avi-Yonah, 'Career trends of Parisian masters of theology, 1200–1320', *History of Universities* 6 (1986–7): 47–64; J. W. Baldwin, '*Studium et Regnum*: the penetration of university personnel into French and English administration at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *Revue des études islamiques* 44 (1976): 199–215; Baldwin, 'Masters at Paris', pp. 138–72; W. J. Courtenay, *Teaching Careers at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Notre Dame, IN, 1988); Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, pp. 6–8.

[73] The pioneering work of this kind was B. Smalley, *The Becket Conflict and the Schools: A Study of Intellectuals in Politics* (Oxford, 1973). Recent outstanding examples include: J. Dunbabin, *A Hound of God: Pierre de la Palud and the Fourteenth-Century Church* (Oxford, 1991); W. C. Jordan, *Unceasing Strife, Unending Fear: Jacques de Thérines and the Freedom of the Church in the Age of the Last Capetians* (Princeton, 2005).

[74] P. Kibre, 'Academic oaths at the university of Paris in the middle ages', in J. H. Mundy, R. W. Emery and B. N. Nelson (eds.), *Essays in Medieval Life and Thought: presented in Honor of Austin Patterson Evans* (New York, 1955), pp. 123–37.

parish priests every year. Both the friars and the secular clergy wanted to be able to claim the support of the university. In 1286 the prelates of the kingdom of France met at Paris and summoned all the masters and students from all the faculties to hear their case. Four archbishops and twenty bishops were present. The archbishop of Bourges, Simon of Beaulieu, explained that they had come to complain to the masters and students about the friars' insolence 'because what we are, you will be; for I believe that there is not a prelate amongst us today who has not been taken from this university'.[75] Clearly the archbishop expected the masters and students to look into their own futures, and to identify with the interests of the secular prelates. Earlier in the century, Robert of Courson had been well aware of the extent to which this might be the case, and had made it clear that to study theology in order to achieve promotion to a prelacy was to commit mental simony.[76] Many, however, were attracted to the university precisely because of the career opportunities that they expected or hoped to be on offer as a result.[77] Even those who espoused the ideals of *Parens scientiarum* expected men transformed by the university to leave. The university was always fundamentally outward-looking.

The university that emerged in Paris in the late twelfth century and continued to develop throughout the thirteenth century was radically different from the schools that had preceded it. The university had become established as a corporation enjoying privileges granted by the king and pope. Students undertook programmes of study which, if they chose to complete them and if they did so successfully, led to the award of degrees. The degree qualified the master to teach, and he was obliged to do so for a minimum period, so the system perpetuated itself, turning the most successful students into masters through a systematic process of scholarly formation. Masters, rather than students, now had control. While there might still be competition for students, they were no longer the decisive source of funding, and they no longer made and broke magisterial careers. Students advanced their careers not by competing with their masters, but by competing with each other, in large part for the approval of their masters. They accepted the authority of their masters because they hoped to wield the same authority in their turn. The time it took to gain academic credibility was critical. The

[75] *Chartularium*, vol. 2, no. 539, pp. 8–11. See I. P. Wei, 'The masters of theology at the university of Paris in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries: an authority beyond the schools', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993): 37–63 at 44–7, 51.

[76] Baldwin, 'Masters at Paris', p. 153, n. 67.

[77] Cobban, 'Medieval student power', pp. 29–30.

twelfth-century student felt that he was ready to assume magisterial status so quickly that he could rival his master, and the master had no means of restraining him, and limited power to offer eventual reward. The thirteenth-century student was slowed down by the structured curriculum and the need to overcome the series of obstacles that led to degrees, and the master could make him wait as he went through that sequence of stages before eventually enjoying magisterial status in the next academic generation.[78]

Every aspect of both study and life was regulated by the institution, and this institutional regulation was of huge ideological significance. Beginning with the statutes of 1215, the university's formal documents adopted key monastic values with regard to learning: the belief that only by living virtuously was it possible to think properly, and that masters had to accept responsibility for their impact on their students. In 1231 *Parens scientiarum* added the powerful vision of the university transforming the men who studied there, turning them into preachers. These formal pronouncements gave the university ideological security, freeing the scholars from the monastic critiques of the twelfth century. In so doing, it also opened the university up to monks and friars. Whatever the ideological debt to monastic culture, however, the secular masters and students were not turned into monks. The university was an extremely complex community of communities, offering masters and students a range of identities. The university as a whole was a single community. Within it, there were other communities, and communities within communities, and communities overlapping with each other: faculties, nations and colleges. There were also communities that straddled the university's conceptual boundaries: the friars and the other religious orders. All of these communities were solemnly defined, with legal privileges and rules, and capable of collective action. Formal documents drew up boundaries, created rituals of great symbolic importance, established routine practices, and claimed loyalty at times of crisis, constructing powerful identities for their members. Underpinning all these structures, each master was surrounded by the students who gained admission to the university by association with him. Individuals, moreover, were members of groups that existed with varying degrees of formality primarily outside the university: families, local churches and patronage networks. Former members of the university offered a vision of the careers that might be taken up when men

[78] Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of Parisian academia in the mid twentieth century presents the dynamic perfectly; see P. Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. P. Collier (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 87–90.

left the university, and suggested their future interests. Being a member of the university therefore meant very different things for different men. The multiplicity of communities did not go unnoticed. Philip the Chancellor, who held office at the time of the 'great dispersion' in 1229, complained in a sermon that to make a *universitas* out of diverse nations was to create a monster. It was a monster with four heads, namely the four faculties.[79]

Unsurprisingly, in view of its structural disjunctures, the university environment was at times highly volatile. There were moments of conflict when individual masters and students had to decide where their loyalties lay: when nation fell out with nation, when secular clerics felt threatened by the friars, or when students brawled with townspeople, to give a few of the most common examples. It might seem as if the instability of the twelfth-century schools had not entirely disappeared, but that would be to underestimate the extent to which, through a process of institutionalization, the university had become a locus of power and authority, both within the institution itself and in relation to the rest of society. Individuals were tied into the corporate structure by statutes and oaths. If a man stayed in the university for any length of time, he soon acquired a stake in its continued existence. As he worked his way through the curriculum and up the career ladder, he took on responsibility for teaching, and assumed offices within the various communities of which he was a member, thus gaining status and authority. Whatever the individual's fate, however, the major conflicts had become collective rather than individual. There was, moreover, a permanence to the university as a community, and to the manifold communities that it embraced. However desperate the rhetoric of the moment, after the 'great dispersion' ended in 1231 the existence of the various corporate bodies was not seriously threatened. The university was culturally distinct, protected by a discourse that combined monastic ideals with a bold claim to transform men into agents of the church's pastoral mission, and it was not going to go away.

The intellectual excitement of the twelfth-century schools is readily detected in narrative accounts of particular lives, some of which were explored in the first chapter. The thirteenth-century university generated no such material, but the mountain of academic work that survives in written form testifies to the intellectual commitment of its scholars. Aristotle's philosophical and scientific works were still being

[79] Haskins, *Studies in Mediaeval Culture*, p. 61, n. 2; Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas*, p. 55, n. 72; J. Schneyer, *Die Sittenkritik in den Predigten Philipps des Kanzlers*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters 39/4 (Münster, 1962), pp. 90–1.

rediscovered and translated from Greek and Arabic, and they were read and interpreted in conjunction with the work of Arab and Jewish scholars who had already grappled with these texts. There are many fine surveys of developments in philosophical and theological thought in the thirteenth century, and just as many brilliant monographs on individual thinkers. The focus here will be on two figures whose influence on others was recognized in the thirteenth century and later, and who articulated different approaches to knowing. Bonaventure was deeply influenced by Augustine and in many respects represented the theological mainstream in the thirteenth century, although there has been much disagreement about the nature of his response to Aristotle and the extent to which he incorporated Aristotelian ideas.[80] Thomas Aquinas, however, unquestionably made systematic use of Aristotle to create a powerful synthesis of different traditions.

Bonaventure

Bonaventure was born, the son of a doctor, in central Italy, in the town of Bagnoregio, between 1217 and 1221. Although Bonaventure never met Francis, he believed that he had been cured of a childhood illness when his mother called upon Francis to come to his aid. As he put it in the prologue to one of two lives of Francis that he later wrote, 'I recognize that God saved my life through him, and I realize that I have experienced his power in my very person.'[81] Bonaventure was probably educated by Franciscans in his home town before going to Paris to study the arts in the mid 1230s. He entered the Franciscan order in 1243, when he began his studies in theology. From 1253 he was in effect a regent master of theology, although as a result of the conflicts between the secular masters and the friars he did not formally receive the title until the pope insisted that it be granted in 1257. In that year he was elected minister general of the order, which plunged him into the thick of the

[80] Bonaventure has been variously interpreted as resistant to the fundamentals of Aristotelian thought, only partially informed about Aristotelian thought and therefore eclectic in his use of what he knew, and incorporating Aristotelian thought in an original fashion. For these views, see respectively: E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of Bonaventure*, trans. I. Trethowan and F. J. Sheed (London, 1938); F. Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, trans. L. Johnston (Louvain, 1955); J. F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St Bonaventure's Philosophy* (Toronto, 1973). For an incisive summary, see M. Haren, *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Toronto, 1992), pp. 165–6.

[81] Bonaventure, *The Life of St Francis (Legenda Maior)*, in Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St Francis*, trans. E. Cousins (New York, 1978), p. 182.

controversy that was splitting the Franciscan order. As the order had developed, it had become difficult to adhere strictly and literally to the ideals of poverty that Francis had espoused. The order could not hope to carry out its preaching mission on an international scale if it did not have buildings, books and other material resources. Compromises had therefore been made, and those who accepted them were known as the Conventuals. Other members of the order, the Spiritual Franciscans, regarded these compromises as a betrayal of Francis. Some of them had also taken up the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore, identifying themselves as the new religious order that would come to the fore in the last age before the end of the world. Bonaventure's predecessor as minister general, John of Parma, was amongst them, and he was forced to resign by Pope Alexander IV. Bonaventure's formidable task was therefore to hold the order together by persuading as many as possible that the institutionalization of the order was consistent with a legitimate interpretation of the ideals of Francis, while dealing forcefully with those Spirituals who continued to dissent. As minister general, Bonaventure was based in Paris but travelled widely. He remained involved in university affairs, preaching on many occasions to university audiences. In 1273 Pope Gregory X made him a cardinal. He was heavily involved in preparations for the Council of Lyons in 1274, and played an active part in it. He died suddenly in July 1274 while the Council was still in progress.[82]

Bonaventure produced a very readable and succinct overview of his thinking in *The Soul's Journey into God*, which he wrote in 1259, having sought inspiration on Mount La Verna where Francis had received the stigmata. Francis had also experienced a vision of a seraph between whose six wings Christ had appeared on the cross, and this vision directly informed Bonaventure's writing:

> While I was there reflecting on various ways by which the soul ascends to God, there came to mind, among other things, the miracle which had occurred to blessed Francis in this very place: the vision of a winged Seraph in the form of the Crucified. While reflecting on this, I saw at once that this vision represented our father's rapture in contemplation and the road by which this rapture is reached. The six wings of the Seraph can rightly be taken to symbolize the six levels of illumination by which, as if by steps or stages, the soul can pass over to peace through ecstatic elevations of Christian wisdom.[83]

[82] For the life of Bonaventure, see E. H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago, 1978), pp. 29–43; C. M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 3–14; Z. Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York, 1999), pp. 16–18.

[83] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, in Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St Francis*, Prologue, 2–3, p. 54.

The Soul's Journey into God consists of a Prologue and seven chapters. The first six chapters describe the six stages of an ascent to God, while the seventh chapter concerns the final goal. The work is relatively short, but highly complex in structure and imagery. There are several organizing principles, which vary in significance at different stages. To complicate matters further, Bonaventure's emphasis was upon synthesis and he cross-referenced from one part of the ascent to another, bringing out key themes repeatedly. He also assumed familiarity with basic ideas, and compressed his account of them accordingly.[84]

Nevertheless Bonaventure made the work accessible by repeatedly stressing one basic structure. The ascent was divided into three parts: first, looking outwards to discover vestiges of God in the material world (chapters 1 and 2); second, looking inwards to find God's image in the spirit (chapters 3 and 4); and third, looking above to contemplate God through two of his names, Being and Good (chapters 5 and 6). In so far as this programme was divided into looking outwards, inwards and above, and in so far as the first two stages concerned vestiges and image respectively, it owed much to Augustine and Hugh of Saint Victor, and it was reassuringly familiar.[85] It was briefly articulated in the titles of chapters and at various points in the text, for example in chapter 1:

> In order to contemplate the First Principle, who is most spiritual, eternal and above us, we must pass through his vestiges, which are material, temporal and outside us ... We must also enter into our soul, which is God's image, everlasting, spiritual and within us ... We must go beyond to what is eternal, most spiritual and above us, by gazing upon the First Principle.[86]

Or again a little further on in the chapter:

> our mind has three principal perceptual orientations. The first is toward exterior material objects and is the basis for its being designated as animal and sensual. The second orientation is within itself and into itself and is the basis for its being designated as spirit. The third is above itself and is the basis for its being designated as mind.[87]

Bonaventure had used and discussed more fully the distinctions between looking outwards, inwards and above in his earlier *Breviloquium*. There he had not only related the first two stages to vestige and image respectively, but had also defined the third stage in terms of similitude.

[84] D. Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 103, esp. n. 5.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 108; Hayes, *Bonaventure*, pp. 54–6.
[86] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 1.2, p. 60. See also 5.1, p. 94 and 7.1, pp. 110–11.
[87] *Ibid.*, 1.4, p. 61.

> the creation of the world is a kind of book in which the Trinity shines forth, is represented and found as the fabricator of the universe in three modes of expression, namely, in the modes of vestige, image, and similitude, such that the reason for the vestige is found in all creatures, the reason for the image in intelligent creatures or rational spirits alone, and the reason for the similitude in the Godlike alone. Hence, as if by certain steplike levels, the human intellect is born to ascend by gradations to the supreme principle, which is God.[88]

That vestige, image and similitude corresponded to looking outwards, inwards and above was made clear when Bonaventure expanded on what he now called man's triple vision.

> Because of this triple vision man receives a triple eye, as Hugh of St Victor says, the eye of the flesh, the eye of reason, and the eye of contemplation: the eye of the flesh by which he sees the world and those things that are in the world, the eye of reason by which he sees the soul and those things that are in the soul, the eye of contemplation by which he sees God and those things that are in God. Thus by the eye of the flesh man sees those things that are outside himself, by the eye of reason those things that are within himself, and by the eye of contemplation those things that are above himself.[89]

Did the third stage of the ascent in *The Soul's Journey into God*, chapters 5 and 6, concern similitude? This is where the work turns out to be much more difficult than it seems at first. In *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure only used the term 'similitude' with reference to the third section once, when summarizing the ascent in chapter 7.[90] This caution is understandable because the distinction that he made between image and similitude in the *Breviloquium* and earlier in his *Commentary on the Sentences* corresponded to the distinction that he made between chapters 3 and 4, within the second section on image, in *The Soul's Journey into God*.[91] On the other hand, the third section was in some sense about similitude because it concerned Being and Good, the two names of God held by Pseudo-Denys to be 'the highest "conceptual" names of God, the most "similar" of the similarities of God'.[92] Indeed, it has been convincingly argued that the three stages of *The Soul's Journey into God* correspond to Pseudo-Denys' notions of symbolic theology, representational theology and conceptual theology.[93] Bonaventure himself further reinforced his structure by relating it to 'the threefold mode of

[88] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. E. E. Nemmers (St Louis, 1946), 2.12.1, p. 75.
[89] *Ibid.*, 2.12.5, p. 76.
[90] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 7.1, p. 111.
[91] *Breviloquium*, 2.12, pp. 75–7. Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, 2; *Opera Omnia*, 2 (Quaracchi, 1885), pp. 404–6. Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 110–11.
[92] Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 114. [93] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.

theology: symbolic, literal and mystical, so that through the symbolic we may rightly use sensible things, through the literal we may rightly use intelligible things and through the mystical we may be lifted above to ecstasy'.[94]

The three parts of the ascent became six when each was divided into two. As far as vestige and image were concerned, this depended on a distinction between 'through' and 'in'. God was contemplated first *through* his vestiges in chapter 1, then *in* his vestiges in chapter 2. He was contemplated first *through* his image in chapter 3, then *in* his image in chapter 4. *The Soul's Journey into God* offers very little explanation of what this distinction means, observing of the three parts:

> Any one of these ways can be doubled, according to whether we consider God as *the Alpha and the Omega* (Apoc. 1.8). Or in each of these ways we can see him through a mirror or in a mirror. Or we can consider each way independently or as joined to another.[95]

Bonaventure had, however, explained this distinction in his *Commentary on the Sentences*:

> To know God *in* a creature is to know his presence and in-flowing in a creature ... But to know God *through* a creature is to be raised from knowledge of the creature to knowledge of God as if by a ladder joining them.[96]

While knowing God *through* his vestiges or his image was to be linked to God by them, it was also in a sense to be separated from God by them. It was thus to remain at a distance from God, whereas knowing God *in* his vestiges or his image was to encounter God's presence in the vestige or image, and so to get much closer.[97] When the third stage was divided to become chapters 5 and 6, the distinction between 'through' and 'in' was preserved in the chapter titles – 'On contemplating the most divine unity *through* its primary name which is Being' and 'On contemplating the most blessed Trinity *in* its name which is Good' – but nothing in the text indicates that it still held any significance for Bonaventure. There was, however, another reason for dividing the ascent into six stages: they could be related to the six powers of the soul.

> Just as there are six stages in the ascent into God, there are six stages in the powers of the soul, through which we ascend from the lowest to the highest,

[94] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 1.7, pp. 62–3.
[95] *Ibid.*, 1.5, p. 61.
[96] Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, 1; *Opera Omnia*, 1 (Quaracchi, 1882), p. 74. My translation, but see Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 109.
[97] See Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 109.

> from the exterior to the interior, from the temporal to the eternal. These are the senses, imagination, reason, understanding, intelligence, and the summit of the mind or the spark of conscience.[98]

To grasp Bonaventure's approach more fully, however, it is necessary to examine each stage in turn.

In the Prologue and the first part of chapter 1, Bonaventure set out the conditions that had to be met before the ascent could be attempted. It was necessary to desire God:

> For no one is in any way disposed for divine contemplation that leads to mystical ecstasy unless like Daniel he is a *man of desires* (Daniel 9.23).[99]

Divine assistance was required, and prayer was therefore essential:

> But we cannot rise above ourselves unless a higher power lift us up. No matter how much our interior progress is ordered, nothing will come of it unless accompanied by divine aid. Divine aid is available to those who seek it from their hearts, humbly and devoutly; and this means to sigh for it in this valley of tears, through fervent prayer. Prayer, then, is the mother and source of the ascent.[100]

Unsurprisingly *The Soul's Journey into God* was at many points itself a work of prayer. In addition to prayer, Bonaventure stressed the importance of leading a virtuous life:

> Whoever wishes to ascend to God must first avoid sin, which deforms our nature, then exercise his natural powers mentioned above: by praying, to receive restoring grace; by a good life, to receive purifying justice; by meditating, to receive illuminating knowledge; and by contemplating, to receive perfecting wisdom.[101]

The value of scholarly endeavour was also limited:

> First, therefore, I invite the reader to the groans of prayer through Christ crucified, through whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of vice – so that he not believe that reading is sufficient without unction, speculation without devotion, investigation without wonder, observation without joy, work without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, endeavour without grace, reflection as a mirror without divinely inspired wisdom.[102]

The central importance of Christ was emphasized throughout: 'All this is done through Jesus Christ.'[103] Bonaventure's approach was very much

[98] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 1.6, p. 62. See also *Breviloquium*, 5.6.6, p. 160.
[99] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, Prologue, 3, p. 55.
[100] *Ibid.*, 1.1, pp. 59–60. [101] *Ibid.*, 1.8, p. 63.
[102] *Ibid.*, Prologue, 4, pp. 55–6. [103] *Ibid.*, 1.7, p. 62.

in line with that taken by monks like Bernard of Clairvaux and William of Saint Thierry, and by Hugh of Saint Victor in the twelfth century.

In the first two chapters, Bonaventure discussed how sense-based knowledge of the material world could lead to knowledge of God. The first chapter was entitled 'On the stages of the ascent into God and on contemplating him through his vestiges in the universe'. Bonaventure invited his reader to see 'the whole material world as a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the supreme Craftsman'.[104] His point was that God had created the universe. As a result everything in it was a vestige, literally a footprint, of God, reflecting his nature in some way. Sense-based knowledge of the created world could therefore be used by the intellect to gain some sort of understanding of the divine, and this in three ways:

> The Creator's supreme power, wisdom and benevolence shine forth in created things, as the bodily senses convey this to the interior senses in three ways. For the bodily senses assist the intellect when it investigates rationally, believes faithfully or contemplates intellectually. In contemplating, it considers the actual existence of things; in believing, the habitual course of things; and in reasoning, the potential excellence of things.[105]

First, by contemplation, things were considered 'in themselves', for example with regard to weight, number and measure. This could lead to 'knowledge of the immense power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator'.[106] Second, by faith, the world was considered with regard to its creation, sacred history and final end. This prompted thoughts of God's power, providence and justice.[107] Third, by reason, a series of hierarchies were perceived in the created world, all indicating the existence of divine perfection. For example, it could be seen 'that some things are changeable and corruptible, as are earthly bodies; others are changeable and incorruptible, as are heavenly bodies. From this [one] realises that other things are unchangeable and incorruptible, as are supercelestial realities'.[108] Sense-based knowledge was therefore valuable because, used correctly, it led to consideration of 'the power, wisdom and goodness of God as existing, living, intelligent, purely spiritual, incorruptible and unchangeable'.[109]

Chapter 2, entitled 'On contemplating God in his vestiges in the sense world', was also about sense-based knowledge, but Bonaventure now focused on the process by which sensory perception produced

[104] *Ibid.*, 1.9, p. 63. [105] *Ibid.*, 1.10, pp. 63–4.
[106] *Ibid.*, 1.11, p. 64. [107] *Ibid.*, 1.12, p. 64.
[108] *Ibid.*, 1.13, p. 64. [109] *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.

knowledge rather than on what was perceived and known about. There were three stages in the process. The first stage was apprehension in which likenesses (or species) of sensed objects entered the soul.[110] This resulted in the second stage which was pleasure. The senses took delight in an object perceived through its likeness because of its beauty in the case of sight, its sweetness in the case of smell and hearing, or its wholesomeness in the case of taste and smell. Pleasure was based on proportion. Proportion could occur in three ways: with regard to form when there was a proper relationship between the likeness and the sensed object; with regard to power when the likeness did not overwhelm the relevant sense, for 'the senses are pained by extremes and delighted in the mean'; with regard to operation when the likeness satisfied a need on the part of the recipient.[111] The third stage was judgement, which meant understanding why pleasure was experienced. The key was 'the proportion of harmony', which Bonaventure explained in terms of abstraction from the particular and the material:

> The basis of harmony is the same in large and small objects; neither is it increased by size nor does it change or pass away as things pass away, nor is it altered by motion. It abstracts, therefore, from place, time and motion, and consequently is unchangeable, unlimited, endless and is completely spiritual.[112]

Bonaventure's point was that judgements could only be made in the light of eternal truths, and eternal truth was only to be found in God.

> judgment leads us to see eternal truths more surely. Judgment takes place through our reason abstracting from place, time and mutability, and thus from dimension, succession and change, through reason which is unchangeable, unlimited and endless. But nothing is absolutely unchangeable, unlimited and endless unless it is eternal. Everything that is eternal is either God or in God. If, therefore, everything which we judge with certainty we judge by such a reason, then it is clear that he himself is the reason of all things and the infallible rule and light of truth, in which all things shine forth infallibly, indelibly, indubitably, irrefutably, indisputably, unchangeably, boundlessly, endlessly, indivisibly and intellectually. Therefore those laws by which we judge with certainty about all sensible things that come under our consideration – since they are infallible and cannot be doubted by the intellect of the one who apprehends them, since they are as if ever present and cannot be erased from the memory of the one who recalls them, since they cannot be refuted or judged by the intellect of the one who judges because, as Augustine says, 'no one passes judgment

[110] For a full account of how Bonaventure understood this process, see Gilson, *Philosophy of Bonaventure*, pp. 341–403; Quinn, *Historical Constitution of St Bonaventure's Philosophy*, pp. 370–4.
[111] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 2.5, p. 71.
[112] *Ibid.*, 2.6, p. 72.

on them, but by them' – these laws must be unchangeable and incorruptible since they are necessary; boundless since they are without limits; and endless since they are eternal – and for this reason they must be indivisible since they are intellectual and incorporeal, not made, but uncreated, existing eternally in the Eternal Art, by which, through which and according to which all beautiful things are formed. Therefore we cannot judge with certainty except in view of the Eternal Art which is the form that not only produces all things but also conserves and distinguishes all things, as the being which sustains the form in all things and the rule which directs all things. Through it our mind judges all things that enter it through the senses.[113]

In short, correct use of sensory perceptions depended on eternal laws that were part of the divine. To understand this was to take a step closer to God. In this light, Bonaventure attached a particular significance to numbers:

Since, therefore, all things are beautiful and in some way pleasurable, and since beauty and pleasure do not exist without proportion, and since proportion exists primarily in numbers, all things must necessarily involve numbers. Thus 'number is the foremost exemplar in the mind of the Creator', and in things, the foremost vestige leading to Wisdom.[114]

This does much to explain Bonaventure's relentless exposition of numerical patterns throughout *The Soul's Journey*, only a few of which are described here.

At the beginning of chapter 3, entitled 'On contemplating God through his image stamped upon our natural powers', Bonaventure called upon the reader to look inwards and use reason to find the image of God, and of the Trinity in particular. Sensory perception was to play no part. The key was to understand that the soul had three powers, memory, intellect and will: 'Consider, therefore, the operations and relationships of these three powers, and you will be able to see God through yourself as through an image, which is to see through a mirror in an obscure manner.'[115]

By memory, Bonaventure meant a great deal more than recollection of the past. The function of memory was threefold, to 'retain and represent ... successive, simple and eternal things'.[116] With regard to successive things, the memory retained 'the past by remembrance, the present by reception and the future by foresight'.[117] It was therefore 'an image of eternity, whose indivisible presence extends to all times'.[118]

[113] *Ibid.*, 2.9, pp. 73–4.
[114] *Ibid.*, 2.10, p. 75; quoting Boethius, *De institutione arithmetica*, I.2.
[115] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 3.1, p. 80.
[116] *Ibid.*, 3.2, p. 80. [117] *Ibid.*
[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 80–1.

By simple things, Bonaventure meant such things as 'the principles of continuous and discrete quantities like the point, the instant and the unit', which we might call basic mathematical and physical concepts.[119] Bonaventure stressed that knowledge of such principles could not be based on sense perception, and so the memory was clearly informed 'from above'.[120] By eternal things, Bonaventure meant 'the principles and axioms of the sciences, as everlasting truths held everlastingly'. These were self-evident principles that anyone would accept upon hearing them. Bonaventure cited examples from Aristotle: 'On any matter, one must either affirm or deny', and 'Every whole is greater than its part.'[121] These truths were innate, and showed that 'the memory has an unchangeable light present to itself in which it remembers immutable truths'.[122] The three activities of the memory demonstrated that 'the soul itself is an image of God and a likeness so present to itself and having God so present that the soul actually grasps him'.[123]

The intellect also had a triple function, to understand terms, propositions and inferences. Understanding terms meant understanding definitions of things. In order to convey the true nature of a thing, definitions had to use more universal terms. Understanding these terms then required the use of still more universal terms until the most universal term was reached. This meant that ultimately no particular thing could be adequately defined without an understanding of being itself. Being could be thought of in many ways short of perfection, but knowing that they were deficient was impossible without awareness of what was in no way deficient. The intellect therefore had to possess knowledge of perfect being, which was God:

Since privations and defects can in no way be known except through something positive, our intellect does not come to the point of understanding any created being by a full analysis unless it is aided by a knowledge of the Being which is most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute, which is unqualified and Eternal Being, in which are the principles of all things in their purity. How could the intellect know that a particular being is defective and incomplete if it had no knowledge of the Being which is free from all defect?[124]

Propositions were understood when they were known with certitude to be true. That meant knowing that the truth could not be different, in other words that it was unchangeable. The human mind, however,

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 80. [120] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 80. Derived from Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 4.15.4 (1006a 1–29) and 5.30.25 (1023b 12–36).
[122] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 3.2, p. 81.
[123] *Ibid.* [124] *Ibid.*, 3.3, pp. 81–2.

was changeable, so it could only recognize the unchangeable 'by means of some light which shines in an absolutely unchangeable way'.[125] To understand an inference was to realize that 'the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises'. An inference differed from a proposition in that it might concern the contingent. Bonaventure's example was: 'If a man is running, the man is moving.' This was clearly true whether or not there was an actual man running, so the necessity of the inference did not derive from any existing thing. Nor did it derive from the existence of something in the soul alone, as that would be a fiction. The necessity of the inference could only derive from 'its exemplarity in the Eternal Art'.[126] Having examined the three functions of the intellect, Bonaventure concluded that 'it is obvious that our intellect is joined to Eternal Truth itself since it can grasp no truth with certitude if it is not taught by this Truth'.[127]

The will also had three functions, namely deliberation, judgement and desire. Deliberation involved asking 'which is better, this or that?' But it was impossible to know that one thing was better than another without knowing that it was more like the best, and this required knowledge of the best. It followed that 'the notion of the highest good is necessarily imprinted in everyone who deliberates'.[128] Judgement made with certainty had to be based on some law. Moreover, one had to be certain that the law was right and that one should not judge the law. If the law came from the mind, the mind would be entitled to judge it, so the law had be higher that the mind. The only thing higher than the human mind was its creator. It followed that 'in judging, our deliberative power touches the divine laws if it reaches a solution by a full analysis'.[129] Desire had to be understood in terms of the pursuit of happiness. True happiness was only to be found in 'the best and ultimate end'. Human desire therefore sought 'nothing except the highest good or what leads to or has some likeness to it'. Those whose desire was not ordered in this fashion were 'deceived and in error'.[130]

Bonaventure's analysis of memory, intellect and will had demonstrated the way in which the divine image was to be found within:

See, therefore, how close the soul is to God, and how, in their operations, the memory leads to eternity, the understanding to truth and the power of choice to the highest good.[131]

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 82. [126] *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3.
[127] *Ibid.*, p. 83. [128] *Ibid.*, 3.4, p. 83.
[129] *Ibid.* [130] *Ibid.*, p. 84. [131] *Ibid.*

Moreover, Bonaventure believed that the 'order, origin and interrelatedness' of the three powers reflected the nature of the Trinity:

From memory, intelligence comes forth as its offspring, since we understand when a likeness which is in the memory leaps into the eye of the intellect in the form of a word. From memory and intelligence love is breathed forth as their mutual bond. These three – the generating mind, the word and love – are in the soul as memory, understanding and will, which are consubstantial, coequal and coeval, and interpenetrate each other. If, then, God is a perfect spirit, he has memory, understanding and will; and he has the Word generated and Love breathed forth, which are necessarily distinct since one is produced by the other – not in order of essence, nor in the order of accident, therefore in the order of persons. When, therefore, the soul considers itself, it rises through itself as through a mirror to behold the blessed Trinity of the Father, the Word and Love: three persons, coeternal, coequal and consubstantial.[132]

Bonaventure then commented on the importance of learning. He noted that the sciences were extremely helpful when the soul looked inwards in the way that he had been describing. Moreover, the sciences themselves reflected the Trinity. Philosophy as a whole was made up of natural philosophy, rational philosophy and moral philosophy. 'The first deals with the cause of being and therefore leads to the power of the Father; the second deals with the basis of understanding and therefore leads to the wisdom of the Word; the third deals with the order of living and therefore leads to the goodness of the Holy Spirit.'[133] Each of the three branches could be further subdivided into three parts: natural philosophy into metaphysics, mathematics and physics; rational philosophy into grammar, logic and rhetoric; and moral philosophy into individual, domestic and political. In each case Bonaventure found a likeness to the Trinity. Bonaventure thus deployed philosophy at a stage in the ascent when sense perception was useless, and reason was needed to explore the workings of the mind. If the process of interior scrutiny went well, there was much to be learned about God.

All these sciences have certain and infallible rules, like rays of light shining down upon our mind from the eternal law. And thus our mind, illumined and flooded by such brilliance, unless it is blind, can be led through itself to contemplate that Eternal Light. The radiation and contemplation of this Light lifts up the wise in wonder; and on the contrary it leads to confusion the fools who do not believe so that they may understand.[134]

But why were some minds blind, and why were there fools, as mentioned in the last line that so clearly echoed Anselm? Why was it so

[132] *Ibid.*, 3.5, p. 84. [133] *Ibid.*, 3.6, pp. 84–5.
[134] *Ibid.*, 3.7, p. 85.

difficult for most people to appreciate what Bonaventure presented as startlingly obvious? Earlier in the chapter Bonaventure had warned that sensory perceptions and the wrong kind of desire could easily obscure the image of God: 'You can see ... through yourself the Truth which teaches you, if your desires and sensory images do not hinder you and interpose themselves like clouds between you and the rays of Truth.'[135] He repeated this point at the start of chapter 4, adding the distraction of worldly cares:

> It seems amazing when it has been shown that God is so close to our souls that so few should be aware of the First Principle within themselves. Yet the reason is close at hand: for the human mind, distracted by cares does not enter into itself through memory; clouded by sense images, it does not turn back to itself through intelligence; allured away by concupiscence, it does not turn back to itself through desire for inner sweetness and spiritual joy. Thus lying totally in these things of sense, it cannot reenter into itself as into the image of God.[136]

This failure was unsurprising given the sinful state into which the human race had fallen. To get close to God, his help was required. While that was always in a sense the case, it was in the fourth chapter that it became the defining characteristic and essential basis of a stage in the ascent.

Chapter 4, entitled 'On contemplating God in his image reformed by the gifts of grace', considered the way in which the soul could be reformed by grace. The key was Christ:

> When one has fallen down, he must lie there unless someone lend a helping hand for him to rise. So our soul could not rise completely from these things of sense to see itself and the Eternal Truth in itself unless Truth, assuming human nature in Christ, had become a ladder, restoring the first ladder that had been broken in Adam. Therefore, no matter how enlightened one may be by the light of natural and acquired knowledge, he cannot enter into himself to delight within himself in the Lord unless Christ be his mediator.[137]

When the soul, as image of God, was reformed, it was 'purified, illumined and perfected' by the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love. By their means, the soul recovered its spiritual senses so that it could see, hear, smell, taste and embrace its spouse, and sing the Song of Songs 'which was composed for the exercise of contemplation in this fourth stage'. All this was 'more a matter of affective experience than rational consideration'.[138] The soul was 'prepared for spiritual ecstasy through devotion, admiration and exultation', each of which

[135] *Ibid.*, 3.3, p. 83. [136] *Ibid.*, 4.1, p. 87.
[137] *Ibid.*, 4.2, pp. 87–8. [138] *Ibid.*, 4.3, p. 89.

was expressed in a passage from the Song of Songs.[139] As a result of the effect of grace, the soul itself was ordered hierarchically: 'When this is achieved, our spirit is made hierarchical in order to mount upward, according to its conformity to the heavenly Jerusalem which no man enters unless it first descend into his heart through grace.'[140] It was then possible to contemplate God within: 'From all this, God is seen as all in all when we contemplate him in our minds, where he dwells through the gifts of the most abundant charity'.[141] A different kind of scholarship was now appropriate: 'For this stage of contemplation the study of the divinely imparted Scripture is especially helpful just as philosophy is for the preceding stage.'[142] The transition from the third to the fourth stage in the ascent was crucial. It marked the shift from nature to grace, from the rational to the affective, and from the study of philosophy to the study of the Bible. It divided the six-stage ascent into two halves, creating a binary structure in addition to the tripartite one which Bonaventure preferred to stress.

At the opening of the fifth chapter, however, the tripartite structure returned to the fore:

> We can contemplate God not only outside us and within us, but also above us: outside through his vestiges, within through his image and above through the light which shines upon our minds, which is the light of Eternal Truth.[143]

Chapters 1 and 2 had looked outwards, chapters 3 and 4 had looked within, and now chapters 5 and 6 would look above. They did so by examining two names for God, each of which had been called God's primary name by a different authority. Chapter 5 contemplated God as Being, with the emphasis on the Old Testament and God's unity, while chapter 6 considered God as Good, with its main focus on the New Testament and the Trinity.

Chapter 5 was entitled 'On contemplating the divine unity through its primary name which is Being'. Having outlined his programme for chapters 5 and 6, Bonaventure proceeded to explain that 'being itself is so certain in itself that it cannot be thought not to be'. He based his thinking on a comparison between being and non-being. His key point was that non-being was 'the privation of being', so it could only be understood in terms of being. Being, on the other hand, was not understood in terms of something else because everything that was understood was understood as non-being or a form of being. Moreover, every

[139] *Ibid.* [140] *Ibid.*, 4.4, p. 90.
[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 90–1. [142] *Ibid.*, 4.5, p. 91.
[143] *Ibid.*, 5.1, p. 94.

limited form of being, a particular being for example, was understood in terms of pure being. Since non-being could only be understood in terms of being, and every type of being in terms of pure being, it followed that pure, divine being was 'what first comes into the intellect'.[144] As the first thing to enter the intellect, being was therefore the means by which all other knowing was possible, and yet the intellect struggled to grasp this:

> Strange, then, is the blindness of the intellect, which does not consider that which it sees first and without which it can know nothing.[145]

Bonaventure made a comparison with light: the eye saw things by means of light, but either did not see light itself or did not notice it.

> Thus our mind, accustomed to the darkness of beings and the images of the things of sense, when it glimpses the light of the supreme Being, seems to itself to see nothing. It does not realize that this very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind, just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems to itself to see nothing.[146]

Bonaventure then considered the nature of pure being, stressing that it was 'eternal, utterly simple, most actual, most perfect and supremely one'.[147] Calling on the reader to wonder, he described being itself in a series of paradoxes, using pairs of adjectives, some of which were apparently contradictory:

> But you have something here to lift you up in wonder, for Being itself is first and last; it is eternal and most present; it is utterly simple and the greatest; it is most actual and most unchangeable; it is most perfect and most immense; it is supremely one and yet all-inclusive.[148]

Moreover, within each pair, being was one thing because it was the other. At this stage, this was something that was open to explanation. Thus, to take the first two pairs mentioned above:

> If you wonder at this with a pure mind, you will be flooded with a greater light when you see further that it is last because it is first. For because it is first, it does all things for itself; and therefore it must necessarily be the ultimate end, the beginning and the consummation, the Alpha and the Omega. It is most present precisely because it is eternal. For because it is eternal, it does not flow from another, nor of itself cease to be, nor pass from one state to another; therefore it has neither past nor future, but only present being.[149]

[144] *Ibid.*, 5.3, p. 96. [145] *Ibid.*, 5.4, p. 96.
[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 96–7. [147] *Ibid.*, 5.5, p. 97.
[148] *Ibid.*, 5.7, p. 98. [149] *Ibid.*, pp. 98–9.

Gradually, however, Bonaventure moved from paradoxes that could be explained to contradictions that could not:

> Because it is eternal and most present, it therefore encompasses and enters all duration as if it were at one and the same time its centre and its circumference. Because it is utterly simple and the greatest, it is, therefore, totally within all things and totally outside them.[150]

Bonaventure was adopting an apophatic strategy that highlighted the inadequacy of human language in describing God, and the need to break language down to advance beyond its limitations.

The sixth chapter was entitled 'On contemplating the most blessed Trinity in its name which is Good'. Echoing Anselm's *Proslogion*, Bonaventure asserted that 'the highest good is without qualification that than which no greater can be thought', and that 'it cannot rightly be thought not to be, since to be is in all ways better than not to be'. Turning then to the Trinity, he further claimed that the highest good 'cannot rightly be thought of unless it be thought of as three in one'.[151] He based this claim on the Dionysian view of good as self-diffusive: 'For good is said to be self-diffusive; therefore the highest good must be most self-diffusive.' His argument further depended on the notion that there was a hierarchy of types of love. First, love of another was superior to love of self, so a second person was required in God. But then it was better for two people to share their love with yet another, so there had to be a third person in God. God had to have, as Bonaventure put it, a 'beloved and a cobeloved'. These second and third persons could not, however, be part of God's creation because 'the diffusion in time in creation is no more than a centre or point in relation to the immensity of the divine goodness'. If one thought of diffusion from God to the created world, one could think of another diffusion greater than this, 'namely, one in which the one diffusing communicates to the other his entire substance and nature'. And, since being was superior to not being, such diffusion had actually to exist. In other words, there had genuinely to be second and third persons in God, if God was to be the highest good and supremely self-diffusive.[152]

Immediately, however, Bonaventure recognized that he was not simply presenting an argument to be followed.

> But when you contemplate these things, do not think that you comprehend the incomprehensible.[153]

[150] *Ibid.*, 5.8, p. 100. [151] *Ibid.*, 6.2, pp. 102–3.
[152] *Ibid.*, pp. 103–4. See Hayes, *Bonaventure*, pp. 108–11.
[153] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, 6.3, pp. 104–5.

He called upon the reader to wonder at the nature of the Trinity, once again adopting an apophatic strategy and offering a series of paradoxes.

For here is supreme communicability with individuality of persons, supreme consubstantiality with plurality of hypostases, supreme configurability with distinct personality, supreme coequality with degree, supreme coeternity with emanation, supreme mutual intimacy with mission. Who would not be lifted up in admiration at the sight of such marvels?[154]

Bonaventure then switched his focus to Christ, inviting the reader to wonder at 'the superwonderful union of God and man in the unity of the Person of Christ'.[155] Contemplation of God as Being had already led to a series of wonder-inducing paradoxes, and now it was necessary to consider that in the divine Being 'is joined the First Principle with the last, God with man, who was formed on the sixth day; the eternal is joined with temporal man, born of the Virgin in the fullness of time, the most simple with the most composite, the most actual with the one who suffered supremely and died, the most perfect and immense with the lowly, the supreme and all-inclusive one with a composite individual distinct from the others, that is, the man Jesus Christ.'[156] Similarly, it was necessary to add to the paradoxes that resulted from contemplating God as Good, wondering that 'in Christ personal union exists with a trinity of substances and a duality of natures; that complete agreement exists with a plurality of wills; that mutual predication of God and man exists with a plurality of properties; that coadoration exists with a plurality of excellence; that coexaltation above all things exists with a plurality of dignity; that codomination exists with a plurality of powers'.[157] Now, at the sixth stage, 'the perfection of the mind's illumination' had been reached.[158]

That left only the goal of the journey, described in the seventh chapter, entitled 'On spiritual and mystical ecstasy in which rest is given to our intellect when through ecstasy our affection passes over entirely into God'. Having found God outside itself, within itself, and above itself, the mind had now to look beyond itself, 'to transcend and pass over not only this sense world but even itself'.[159] Christ was the means by which this might be accomplished, as had been shown to Francis on Mount La Verna. At this critical juncture the intellect had to be abandoned, and it was love alone that took the final step:

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 105. [155] *Ibid.*, 6.4, p. 106.
[156] *Ibid.*, 6.5, p. 107. [157] *Ibid.*, 6.6, p. 108.
[158] *Ibid.*, 6.7, p. 108. [159] *Ibid.*, 7.1, p. 111.

In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God.[160]

Human endeavour did not count for much; there was little point in asking questions, talking or writing. God's giving was what mattered.

Since, therefore, in this regard nature can do nothing and effort can do but little, little importance should be given to inquiry, but much to unction; little importance should be given to the tongue, but much to inner joy; little importance should be given to words and to writing, but all to the gift of God, that is, the Holy Spirit.[161]

To emphasize the uselessness of words in the face of the ineffable, Bonaventure returned to the use of paradox, quoting directly from Pseudo-Denys' *Mystical Theology*. Pseudo-Denys had prayed to be directed into the 'summit of mystical communication':

There new, absolute and unchangeable mysteries of theology are hidden in the superluminous darkness of a silence teaching secretly in the utmost obscurity which is supermanifest – a darkness which is super-resplendent and in which everything shines forth and which fills to overflowing invisible intellects with the splendours of invisible goods that surpass all good.[162]

Bonaventure also quoted Pseudo-Denys when he described this as a 'state of unknowing'.[163] In the *Breviloquium* he described how the spirit was 'carried beyond its own self into darkness and delight' by 'a certain learned ignorance'.[164]

There has been considerable disagreement about the nature of the ascent outlined in *The Soul's Journey into God*, especially regarding its intended audience and its relationship with lived experience. It has been argued that the three basic parts offer three distinct ways of approaching God that could be pursued entirely independently of each other.[165] On similar lines, it has even been suggested that the six stages can be seen as 'representations of different spiritualities that speak to different types of religious persons'.[166] While the text is open to such readings, they ignore the unity of the ascent as a whole and the tremendous care with which Bonaventure constructed the relationships between the various stages. Recognizing this, it has been argued that the ascent should not be seen as 'a series of successive steps' in which moving to a higher level entails abandonment of the one below it. Rather, Bonaventure's

[160] *Ibid.*, 7.4, p. 113. [161] *Ibid.*, 7.5, p. 113.
[162] *Ibid.*, p. 114. [163] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.
[164] *Breviloquium*, 5.6.7, p. 160.
[165] E. Cousins, 'Introduction', in Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey*, p. 23.
[166] Hayes, *Bonaventure*, p. 32.

conception of hierarchy was such that 'every step contains within it all that is contained in the lower', so that 'at each step the progress of the soul is understood to be inclusive, as containing all that precedes that step'.[167] This fits entirely with the view of human knowledge that Bonaventure expressed in *Retracing the Arts to Theology* (*De reductione artium ad theologiam*) where he identified six illuminations: sacred scripture, sense perception, mechanical knowledge, rational philosophy, natural philosophy and moral philosophy. He maintained that 'all these branches of knowledge' were 'ordained for the knowledge of Sacred Scripture; they are contained in it; they are perfected by it; and by means of it they are ordained for eternal illumination'.[168]

Taken as a whole, however, the ascent in *The Soul's Journey into God* was clearly not a realistic possibility for everyone. It supposed a very high degree of learning, including the arts and theology, and can only have been meaningful in its entirety for an intellectual elite. It has been described as 'a university guidebook', as 'a general portrait of how the immediate learning experiences of university students should be understood at their more lasting, deeper, and more tested levels'.[169] To some extent, however, it seems likely that Bonaventure had a specifically Franciscan audience in mind. One of the tensions threatening the unity of the order arose from the growing dominance of university-educated men whose attitude to learning was very different from that which Francis himself had espoused. *The Soul's Journey* sought to reconcile university learning with the spiritual traditions established by Francis. Bonaventure wanted to show that the unlearned Francis was a meaningful model for learned men, and that learning did not make it impossible to follow his ideals of poverty.

The Soul's Journey was not, however, a programme of study to be followed step by step. In other works Bonaventure structured human knowledge differently. For example, in *Retracing the Arts to Theology* he offered two schemes. He began by discussing four lights: the external light of mechanical skill, the lower light of sense perception, the inner light of philosophical knowledge, and finally the higher light of grace and sacred scripture. He then presented a modified classification

[167] Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 112–13.

[168] Bonaventure, *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, trans. Sister Emma Thérèse Healy (New York, 1955) reprinted in A. Hyman and J. J. Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions* (Indianapolis, 1973, repr. 1978), p. 425.

[169] S. F. Brown, 'Introduction', in Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. P. Boehner, ed. with introduction and notes by S. F. Brown (Indianapolis, 1993), p. xi; see also pp. 69–71.

consisting of the six illuminations mentioned above. Bonaventure regarded these as complementary ways of thinking about how God should be approached, entirely consistent with each other, and allowing him to make different points about religious and intellectual formation.

For Bonaventure, there was much to be learned about God on the basis of sense perception. A large part of rational thought, however, was not sense-based: by looking inward, it was possible to discover innate ideas that brought much greater illumination. Ultimately, however, the intellect failed in pursuit of God, language collapsed into paradox and contradiction, and it was love that had the potential for union with God. Indeed, from the outset knowledge of God was only possible for those who lived virtuously, desiring God and receiving his help. Bonaventure's approach was entirely consistent with that of twelfth-century monks like Bernard of Clairvaux and William of Saint Thierry. Like Hugh of Saint Victor, however, he granted a role for learning. Indeed, he gave learning an even greater role than Hugh because different forms of scholarship came into play at different stages in the ascent. The practices of the university therefore generated many different forms of valuable knowledge.

Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas was born in southern Italy in 1224 or 1225, probably at the family castle of Roccasecca. As a child he was sent as an oblate to the abbey of Monte Cassino. From 1239 to 1244, he studied the arts at the university of Naples. In view of his subsequent scholarship, it is perhaps not insignificant that at Naples students were taught works by Aristotle that were formally banned in Paris. He joined the Dominican order in 1244, but was seized and held by his family for over a year because they wished him to enter a traditional monastic order. Once he was released, he was sent by the Dominican order to Paris where, from 1245 to 1248, he was taught in the convent of Saint Jacques by Albert the Great. He moved to Cologne in 1248, where he continued his studies under Albert and was ordained as a priest. In 1252 he returned to Paris, where he studied theology until 1256. From 1256 to 1259 he was a master of theology in Paris. It was probably during this spell in Paris that he began his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, which, according to a fourteenth-century chronicle, he wrote at the request of Raymund of Pennaforte, a former master general of the Dominican order, to assist Dominicans who were preaching in Spain in opposition to Moslems, Jews and heretics. He spent the years between 1259 and 1269 in Italy,

at Naples, at Orvieto, where he completed the *Summa Contra Gentiles* in 1264, and in Rome, where he set up a studium at the convent of Santa Sabina. It was there that he began the *Summa Theologiae* in 1266, a summary of theology for beginners, although there has been some debate about the level at which he intended to pitch the work. From 1269 to 1272 he was once again a master of theology in Paris. He left in 1272 to establish a provincial studium at the priory of San Domenico in Naples, where his lectures were also open to members of the university. He stopped writing in 1273, saying that he could not go on 'because all that I have written seems like straw to me'. Historians have speculated that he suffered a stroke or some sort of breakdown. Whatever the cause, he left the third and final part of the *Summa Theologiae* unfinished, and his followers added a *Supplement* made up of extracts taken from his *Commentary on the Sentences*. In 1274 he set off to attend the Council of Lyons, but hit his head on a tree branch, perhaps while travelling on a donkey. He died south of Rome, at the Cistercian abbey of Fossanova, on 7 March 1274.[170]

Aquinas produced a vast body of work. Seeking to explain his prodigious output, contemporaries noted his extraordinary powers of memory and concentration, prompting numerous anecdotal recollections and stories. It was said that he would dictate to three or even four secretaries at the same time, to each on a different subject.[171] While dining with King Louis IX, he supposedly became absorbed in thinking about Manichean heresy, suddenly thumped the table in triumph, and then called for a secretary to whom he could dictate his refutation of the heresy, before having to explain that he had thought that he was at his desk.[172] It is extremely difficult to give an account of his work, certainly not because it lacks clarity, but because his all-embracing overviews were vast and detailed, unlike Bonaventure's compressed summaries, and above all because each component of his thought relates to every other component, and he made readers very aware of this. Understanding any one point seems to depend upon understanding the whole web of interconnected ideas. It is impossible not to wonder at his apparent ability to keep all aspects of his thought in mind simultaneously and to sustain them all consistently. Rather than attempting to summarize 'everything', the following account plots a

[170] The finest account of Aquinas' life is J. A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought and Works* (New York, 1974). Almost all histories of medieval thought contain a brief biographical summary.

[171] Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, p. 137.

[172] B. Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, 1992), p. 8.

particular path through his work, designed to allow comparison with Bonaventure on key issues.[173]

Aquinas held that there were two ways of knowing, by natural reason and by grace. He stated this most clearly when discussing knowledge of God. In the *Summa Theologiae*, for example, he observed: 'By grace we have a more perfect knowledge of God than we have by natural reason.'[174] In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, he wrote:

> There are two ways of knowing what we hold to be true about God. There are some truths about God that exceed the capacity of human reason – for example the fact that God is three and one. There are also some truths that natural reason can attain, such as that God exists, that he is one, and other truths of this kind. These are truths about God that have been conclusively proved by philosophers making use of their natural reason.[175]

Clearly knowledge obtained through grace was superior to natural knowledge achieved through the use of reason. As we shall see, however, Aquinas valued natural knowing very highly, and tried to explain how it worked in great detail.

Before attempting to give an account of how Aquinas thought natural knowing worked, two general points are worth making. First, for Aquinas, all natural knowledge was sense-based: 'in this life all knowledge that is in our intellects originates in the senses'.[176] He did not mean that it was only possible to know what was actually perceived through the senses, but that the process of knowing always began with and proceeded with reference back to what had been sensed: 'things that are not perceived by the senses cannot be grasped by the human intellect except in so far as knowledge of them is gathered from the senses'.[177] Second, however, data provided by the senses did not itself constitute intellectual knowledge. For intellectual knowledge to be achieved, the intellect itself had to act upon and receive what was provided by the senses. He explained this process by distinguishing between two powers. One was the *intellectus agens*, which is generally translated as the

[173] Every history of medieval thought has a summary seeking to cover the main characteristics of Aquinas' work, and I have chosen to address those aspects which as a student I could not follow, and with which my own students have most difficulty.

[174] ST, 1a.12.13 (vol. 3, p. 43).

[175] *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.3, in P. E. Sigmund (trans. and ed.), *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* (New York, 1988), p. 3; see also Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. A. C. Pegis, 5 vols. (New York, 1955–7), vol. 1, p. 63. Henceforth SCG.

[176] SCG 1.3, in Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, p. 3; see also Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Pegis, vol. 1, p. 64.

[177] *Ibid.*

'agent intellect' or the 'active intellect'. The other was the *intellectus possibilis*, which historians variously call the 'potential intellect', 'possible intellect', 'receptive intellect' or occasionally 'passive intellect'. The two terms were taken from the work of Aristotle, but it was not entirely clear what he meant by them. Consequently later scholars, not least in the University of Paris, interpreted him very differently. Was there just one active intellect shared by everyone, which could perhaps be identified with God? Or was there a single potential intellect shared by all? These matters were a cause of great controversy in thirteenth-century Paris, but according to Aquinas, and he thought he was agreeing with Aristotle, each individual soul had an agent intellect and a potential intellect.

As Aquinas explained it, when a thing was perceived by the senses an image which he called a 'phantasm' was produced and stored in the imagination. From the phantasm, the agent intellect abstracted an idea of the perceived object's defining characteristics, of what made it what it was, of its 'whatness' or 'quiddity'. Aquinas also called it a 'form' and an 'intelligible species'. Having been abstracted from phantasms by the agent intellect, these intelligible species were retained in the potential intellect. Thus, considering whether intellectual knowledge was taken from sensible things, he explained:

> That higher, superior agent which Aristotle calls the agent intellect ... by a process of abstraction makes images [phantasms] received from the senses actually intelligible. According to this, then, intellectual activity is caused by the senses by way of these images [phantasms]. However, since these images [phantasms] are not capable of effecting a change in the possible intellect but must be made actually intelligible by the agent intellect, it is not right to say that sensible knowledge is the total and complete cause of intellectual knowledge – better to say that it is somehow the material of the cause.[178]

When asking whether the intellect could understand through intelligible species without turning to phantasms, he explained that the intellect could only deal with quiddities, and since these existed in particular material things which were apprehended through the senses, the intellect had to turn to phantasms in order to obtain the intelligible species which would permit understanding:

> The proper object of the human intellect ... since it is joined to a body, is a nature or 'whatness' [quidditas] found in corporeal matter ... But by definition a nature of this kind exists in an individual which has corporeal matter, for instance it is of the nature of stone that it should exist in this or that particular stone, or of the nature of horse that it should exist in this or that particular horse, etc. Thus the nature of stone or any other material reality cannot be known truly and completely except in so far as it exists in a particular thing. Now we apprehend the particular through the senses and imagination. Therefore if it is actually to understand its proper object, then the intellect must needs turn to sense images [phantasms] in order to look at universal natures existing in particular things.[179]

[178] ST 1a.84.6 (vol. 12, p. 37).

Looking more closely at the process of abstraction from phantasms, he explained that it meant isolating the universal 'definition of the species' from the 'individuating conditions' which made, for example, one stone distinct from any other stone:

> I claim likewise that whatever pertains to the definition of any species of material reality, for instance stone or man or horse, can be considered without individuating conditions which are no part of the definition of the species. And this is what I mean by abstracting the universal from the particular, the idea [intelligible species] from sense images [phantasms], to consider the nature of a species without considering individuating conditions represented by sense images [phantasms].[180]

Once the intelligible species had been abstracted from the phantasms, they could be used by the intellect in thought; they were 'that by which the intellect understands'.[181] First, the potential intellect could form a 'mental word, which is nothing other than a concept of mind expressing what he is thinking about'.[182] Aquinas also referred to this concept as a 'definition' and, in a technical sense unrelated to moral purpose, an 'intention'.[183] Second, it could compose or divide, by which he meant constructing propositions or statements that either affirmed or denied something about something else. It was the definition or these propositions, rather than the intelligible species, that were signified by words:

> first, there is an effect produced in the possible intellect in so far as it is informed by an intelligible species; and then, secondly, when it is thus informed, it formulates either a definition or else division or composition, which is then signified by words. Thus the meaning which a name signifies is a definition, and a proposition signifies the intellect's composing or dividing. Therefore words do not signify the intelligible species, but those things which the intellect formulates for itself in order to understand things outside.[184]

[179] ST 1a.84.7 (vol. 12, pp. 41–3).
[180] ST 1a.85.1.ad1 (vol. 12, p. 53).
[181] ST 1a.85.2 (vol. 12, p. 61).
[182] ST 1a2ae.93.1.ad2 (vol. 28, p.55).
[183] For a brief but invaluable summary of the different meanings attached to the term 'intention', see Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 139–40.
[184] ST 1a.85.2 (vol. 12, p. 63); I have adapted the translation.

It was when the intellect constructed propositions pertaining to things outside itself that it could know the truth by judging that there was a correspondence between a thing outside itself and its concept of that thing:

truth is defined as conformity between intellect and thing. Hence to know that conformity is to know truth. Sense however does not know that conformity in any way; for although sight possesses the likeness of the visible thing, it does not know the correspondence between the thing and what it apprehends about it. Intellect can know its own conformity to the thing known; yet it does not grasp that conformity in the mere act of knowing the quiddity of a thing. But when the intellect judges that the thing corresponds to the form of the thing which it apprehends, then for the first time it knows and affirms the truth. This it does in the act of composing and dividing; for in every proposition some form signified by the predicate is either joined to some thing signified by the subject or separated from it.[185]

It was also when propositions were formulated that mistakes could be made:

in affirming and denying one thing of another, intellect can be deceived in affirming of a thing whose quiddity it understands, something which does not follow from the quiddity or is incompatible with it.[186]

Although Aquinas maintained that fundamentally the intellect could not go wrong when abstracting quiddities ('with respect to the quiddity of a thing, speaking essentially, the intellect makes no mistakes'[187]), he recognized that there could be mistakes 'accidentally' when the quiddity itself implied a false proposition:

Since falsity is in the intellect only in its function of combining concepts in the judgment, there can be falsity in the operation of knowing quiddities accidentally, in so far as some element of judgment enters in. This can happen in two ways: in one way when the intellect attributes the definition of one thing to another, e.g. by saying the definition of circle applies to man; so that the definition of the one is false of another; in another way when the intellect puts together in one definition elements which are incompatible: so that the definition is not only false as applied to some thing, but false in itself. Thus the reason why the intellect is false in forming the definition, 'four-footed rational animal', is that it is false in making the judgment, 'some rational animal is four-footed'.[188]

[185] ST 1a.16.3 (vol. 4, p. 81); I have adapted the translation.
[186] ST 1a.17.3 (vol. 4, p. 109); I have adapted the translation.
[187] ST 1a.85.6 (vol. 12, p. 81); I have adapted the translation.
[188] ST 1a.17.3 (vol. 4, p. 109); I have adapted the translation. See also 1a.85.6 (vol. 12, p. 81).

Having reached the stage of forming propositions, however, it was possible to proceed to reasoning by syllogisms.

It is worth emphasizing again that for Aquinas all thought involved recourse to phantasms in some way. As he put it, 'It is impossible for our intellect, in its present state of being joined to a body capable of receiving impressions, actually to understand anything without turning to phantasms.' He considered this to be evident because the intellect used no corporeal organ and, if it did not depend on faculties like the senses and the imagination which did use corporeal organs, should have been able to function even when there was physical damage to the corporeal organs on which the senses and imagination relied. It could be observed, however, that 'if acts of the imagination are impeded by an injury to its organ – for instance, in a seizure – or, similarly, if acts of sense memory are impeded – for instance, in a coma – a man is impeded from actually understanding even things which he had known before', so obviously intellect was dependent on the senses and the imagination, which provided it with phantasms. Moreover, Aquinas also cited the routine experience of understanding: 'As anyone can experience for himself, if he attempts to understand anything, he will form phantasms for himself which serve as examples in which he can, as it were, look at what he is attempting to understand.' Phantasms were therefore always involved in knowing.[189]

Exactly how phantasms were involved, however, depended on what was being known. How the intellect knew individual things required some explanation because, as we have seen, it depended on quiddities, or intelligible species, which were universals bearing no trace of particular things.

Directly and immediately our intellect cannot know the singular in material realities. The reason is that the principle of singularity in material things is individual matter, and our intellect ... understands by abstracting intelligible species from this sort of matter. But what is abstracted from individual matter is universal. Therefore our intellect has direct knowledge only of universals.[190]

While the intellect could not have direct knowledge of individual things, by reflecting on the process by which intelligible species were abstracted it could work its way back to phantasms and thus know particular things 'indirectly and by a quasi-reflection'.[191]

Even things that Aquinas did not think could be sensed at all could only be known in the intellect through processes involving phantasms

[189] ST 1a.84.7 (vol. 12, p. 41); I have adapted the translation.
[190] ST 1a.86.1 (vol. 12, p. 91); I have adapted the translation.
[191] *Ibid.*

which were sense-based. Thus knowledge of the self required reflection on the process of knowing through sense perception: 'Since it is connatural for our intellect in the present life to look to material, sensible things ... it follows that our intellect understands itself according as it is made actual by species abstracted from sensible realities by the light of the agent intellect.'[192] Or again: 'While the soul is joined to the body, it understands by turning to sense images; it cannot even understand itself except in that it comes to be actually understanding through a species abstracted from sense images.'[193] So self-awareness was also achieved indirectly, through awareness of the sense-based process of knowing other things. Thinking about things that did not actually exist involved phantasms too. Phantasms were retained in the imagination or phantasy, which was 'a treasure-store of forms received through the senses'.[194] In the imagination, it was possible to combine phantasms to form new ones: 'in the imagination we can form the image of a golden mountain from those of gold and a mountain'.[195] Thus, again through phantasms, it was possible to think about things that did not exist and had therefore not actually been sensed.

What about God? Although God could not be known directly through the senses, Aquinas was clear that some knowledge about God, above all knowledge that he existed, was obtainable on the basis of what could be sensed: 'our intellect is led from the objects of the senses to the knowledge of the existence of God'.[196] This knowledge was not easily achieved, but it was very much the point of philosophy: 'To know what reason can investigate concerning God requires that one already have a knowledge of many things, since almost all of philosophy is directed towards the knowledge of God.'[197] His approach to proving the existence of God was quite different from Anselm's, and indeed, while not naming Anselm, he explicitly rejected the ontological proof. He pointed out that 'someone hearing the word "God" may very well not understand it to mean "that than which nothing greater can be thought"'. Even if that meaning were accepted, the argument simply did not work:

[192] ST 1a.87.1 as cited in Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 214.
[193] ST 1a.89.2 as cited in Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 214.
[194] ST 1a.78.4 (vol. 11, p. 139).
[195] ST 1a.12.9 (vol. 3, p. 33).
[196] SCG 1.3, in Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, p. 3; see also Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Pegis, vol. 1, p. 64.
[197] SCG 1.4, in Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, p. 4; see also Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Pegis, vol. 1, p. 67.

And even if the meaning of the word 'God' were generally recognized to be 'that than which nothing greater can be thought', nothing thus defined would thereby be granted existence in the world of fact, but merely as thought about. Unless one is given that something in fact exists than which nothing greater can be thought – and this nobody denying the existence of God would grant – the conclusion that God in fact exists does not follow.[198]

Aquinas' approach was to argue from effect to cause, the effects being open to sense perception: 'From effects evident to us ... we can demonstrate what in itself is not evident to us, namely, that God exists.'[199]

Aquinas offered five ways in which it was possible to prove the existence of God. The first was based on our observation of 'motion', by which he meant what we would call 'change':

Some things in the world are certainly in process of change: this we plainly see. Now anything in process of change is being changed by something else. This is so because it is characteristic of things in process of change that they do not yet have the perfection towards which they move, though able to have it; whereas it is characteristic of something causing change to have that perfection already. For to cause change is to bring into being what was previously only able to be, and this can only be done by something that already is ... Now the same thing cannot at the same time be both actually x and potentially x, though it can be actually x and potentially y ... Consequently, a thing in process of change cannot itself cause that same change; it cannot change itself. Of necessity therefore anything in process of change is being changed by something else. Moreover, this something else, if in process of change, is being changed by yet another thing; and this last by another. Now we must stop somewhere, otherwise there will be no first cause of the change, and, as a result, no subsequent causes. For it is only when acted upon by the first cause that the intermediate causes will produce the change ... Hence one is bound to arrive at some first cause of change not itself being changed by anything, and this is what everybody understands as God.[200]

Aquinas' argument was that we can see that things change. Nothing can change itself; anything that is changing has to be changed by something else. If that something else is changing, it too has to be changed by something else. This chain of things being changed by something else cannot go on for ever or there would be no first mover, or first cause of change. Crucially, however, if there were no first mover, something changing other things but not being changed itself, something therefore different in nature from any other thing, there would be nothing to set off the chain of things changing other things, and thus no movement

[198] ST 1a.2.1 (vol. 2, pp. 7–9).
[199] ST 1a.2.2 (vol. 2, p.11).
[200] ST 1a.2.3 (vol. 2, pp. 13–15).

at all. But we can see that that there is change, so something must have set it off: 'one is bound to arrive at some first cause of change not itself being changed by anything, and this is what everybody understands by God'.

The second and third proofs depended on similar objections to an infinite series. The second concerned causation, and began with the statement: 'In the observable world causes are found to be in ordered series; we never observe, nor ever could, something causing itself, for this would mean it preceded itself, and this is not possible.' Aquinas then argued that this series of causes could not be infinite because 'if you eliminate a cause you also eliminate its effects, so that you cannot have a last cause, nor an intermediate one unless you have a first'. If there were no first cause, 'there would be no intermediate causes either, and no last effect, and this would be an open mistake'. It was therefore necessary 'to suppose some first cause, to which everyone gives the name "God"'.[201]

The third proof applied the same idea about infinite series to sequences of things bringing other things into existence. It was complicated by the distinction that Aquinas felt obliged to make between things that had to exist and things that did not. He began by establishing that there had to be some things that must exist because 'if everything need not be, once upon a time there was nothing', and 'if that were true there would be nothing even now, because something that does not exist can only be brought into being by something already existing'. Since things clearly did exist, 'there has got to be something that must be'. Turning specifically to things that must exist, Aquinas argued that such a thing 'may or may not owe this necessity to something else'. Things that owed the necessity of their existence to something else would form a 'series of things which must be and owe this to other things'. This series could not be infinite, and one had 'to suppose something which must be, and owes this to no other thing than itself; indeed it itself is the cause that other things must be'.[202] The point was that if one did not make such a supposition, Aquinas held that nothing would exist, and our senses told us that things did exist.

The fourth proof was 'based on the gradation observed in things', and the key point was that judgements about relative values could only be made if there were an absolute:

> Some things are found to be more good, more true, more noble, and so on, and other things less. But such comparative terms describe varying degrees of

[201] ST 1a.2.3 (vol. 2, p. 15).
[202] *Ibid.*

> approximation to a superlative; for example, things are hotter and hotter the nearer they approach what is hottest. Something therefore is the truest and best and most noble of things, and hence the most fully in being; for Aristotle says that the truest things are the things most fully in being.[203]

So our perception that some things are better than others meant we had to suppose the existence of something that was the best. Aquinas then took from Aristotle the notion that goodness and being were identical, so that the best was the most fully in being. He further cited Aristotle to the effect that the thing possessing some property most fully is the cause of that property in other things. He concluded: 'There is something therefore which causes in all other things their being, their goodness, and whatever other perfection they have. And this we call "God".'[204]

The fifth proof rested on our perception of 'the guidedness of nature':

> An orderedness of actions to an end is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness. For their behaviour hardly ever varies, and will practically always turn out well; which shows that they truly tend to a goal, and do not merely hit it by accident. Nothing however that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call 'God'.[205]

According to Aquinas, it could be seen that things that lacked consciousness nevertheless fulfilled a purpose within the natural order. Since they could not direct themselves to fulfil this purpose, because they lacked consciousness, it followed that there must be an intelligent being directing them to fill their role in the natural order, 'and this we call "God"'.

Aquinas thus argued that knowledge of the material world based on sense perception made it possible also to know by natural reason that God existed. While not everyone could do this, for those who could there was certain knowledge that God existed. He did not suppose for a moment, however, that this constituted a complete knowledge or understanding of God. It involved arguing from effect to cause, and the effects were so unequal to the cause that only limited knowledge of the cause was possible:

> The knowledge that is natural to us has its source in the senses and extends just so far as it can be led by sensible things; from these, however, our understanding

[203] ST 1a.2.3 (vol. 2, pp. 15–17).
[204] ST 1a.2.3 (vol. 2, p. 17). [205] *Ibid.*

cannot reach to the divine essence. Sensible creatures are effects of God which are less than typical of the power of their cause, so knowing them does not lead us to understand the whole power of God and thus we do not see his essence.[206]

Aquinas was equally aware of the inadequacy of language when referring to God:

Aristotle says that words are signs for thoughts and thoughts are likenesses of things, so words refer to things indirectly through thoughts. How we refer to a thing depends on how we understand it. We have seen already that in this life we do not see the essence of God, we only know him from creatures; we think of him as their source, and then as surpassing them all and as lacking anything that is merely creaturely. It is the knowledge we have of creatures that enables us to use words to refer to God, and so these words do not express the divine essence as it is in itself.[207]

Language was rooted in the created world, and only knowledge of that world made it possible to use words of God. Words were therefore unequal to the task of referring to God's true nature. It followed that 'God is said to have no name, or to be beyond naming because his essence is beyond what we understand of him and the meaning of the names we use'.[208] There was less difficulty when negative terms were used to say 'what he is not', but positive terms like 'good' or 'wise' were bound to 'fail to represent adequately what he is'.[209]

There was, however, the second way of knowing: 'By grace we have a more perfect knowledge of God than we have by natural reason.'[210] Aquinas defined grace as 'a certain participation in the divine nature, which surpasses every nature'.[211] It could have a powerful effect on knowing:

[Natural reason] depends on two things: images [phantasms] derived from the sensible world and the natural intellectual light by which we abstract intelligible concepts from these images. In both these respects human knowledge is helped by the revelation of grace. The light of grace strengthens the intellectual light and at the same time prophetic visions provide us with God-given images which are better suited to express divine things than those we receive naturally from the sensible world. Moreover, God has given us sensible signs and spoken words to show us something of the divine.[212]

[206] ST 1a.12.12 (vol. 3, p. 41).
[207] ST 1a.13.1 (vol. 3, p. 49).
[208] ST 1a.13.1.ad1 (vol. 3, p. 49).
[209] ST 1a.13.2 (vol. 3, pp. 53–5).
[210] ST 1a.12.13 (vol. 3, p. 43).
[211] ST 1a2e.112.1 (vol. 30, p. 145).
[212] ST 1a.12.13 (vol. 3, pp. 43–5).

Thus grace both strengthened the capacity to know by natural reason and offered entirely different sources of knowledge about God.

Revealed knowledge came in many forms. Aquinas defined prophecy, for example, as knowledge revealed by God and beyond natural human capacity. As he explained, 'Those truths which surpass all human knowledge and which are revealed from God cannot find confirmation in that human reasoning which they transcend, but only in the working of divine power.'[213] Prophetic knowledge could concern anything:

prophetic knowledge is brought about by a divine light which makes possible the knowledge of all realities, whether they be human or divine, spiritual or corporeal. And so prophetic revelation extends to all such realities.[214]

On the other hand, types of prophetic knowledge were ordered in a hierarchy:

Yet we should consider that because prophecy relates to what is far from our range of knowledge, then the more a reality is distant from human knowledge, the more properly will that reality belong to prophecy.

There are three degrees of remoteness from human knowing. The first covers what is hidden from this or that individual, whether in sense or intellect, yet is not hidden from men in general; just as a man knows by his senses what is adjacent to him in place while another person, with the same senses, fails to know because he is not adjacent. Thus ... the thoughts of one person's heart can be manifested prophetically to another. In this way too the knowledge which one has by demonstration can be revealed to us in prophecy.

The second degree comprises those truths which universally surpass the knowledge of all men, not because they are intrinsically unknowable, but because of a defect in human knowledge. An example of this is the mystery of the Trinity ...

Third, and most remote of all, is that which surpasses the knowledge of all men, because the truths concerned are not knowable; such are future contingents whose truth is not determined.

Now because what is universal and self-caused surpasses what is particular and caused by another, so the revelation of future events most properly belongs to prophecy.[215]

Thus prophecy was especially about the future. There were, however, no rules about who might receive prophetic knowledge; God could give it to anyone, without regard for 'natural dispositions'.[216] Intellectual ability and education were also irrelevant, and masters of theology did

[213] ST 2a2ae.171.1 (vol. 45, p. 7).
[214] ST 2a2ae.171.3 (vol. 45, p. 15)
[215] ST 2a2ae.171.4 (vol. 45, pp. 15–17).
[216] ST 2a2ae.172.3 (vol. 45, pp. 34–9).

not always respond positively to those who claimed to have received prophetic knowledge.[217]

It was even possible that someone in this life might see God in his essence, but it would require God to remove that person entirely from the normal processes of knowing. This was the experience of 'rapture', which was related in some way to prophecy.[218] Paul had said of himself, 'I know a man in Christ who was caught up to the third heaven.'[219] Aquinas explained that this was when someone 'by the spirit of God is uplifted to a supernatural level, with abstraction from the senses'.[220] Beginning with a brief account of natural, sense-based knowing of individual things, he went on to explain in detail why rapture required complete removal from the senses:

> The divine essence cannot be seen by any knowing faculty of man other than the intellect. But the human intellect only turns to sense-objects through the medium of phantasms, which it receives from the senses by means of intelligible species, and through considering which it judges and disposes of sense-objects. And so in every operation by which our intellect is abstracted from phantasms, it must also be abstracted from the senses.
>
> But the intellect of man in this life must be abstracted from phantasms, if it is to see the essence of God. For the essence of God cannot be seen through any phantasm, nor even through any created intelligible species, because the essence of God infinitely exceeds not only all bodies, which are represented by phantasms, but also all created intelligibles.
>
> When the intellect of man is raised to the highest vision of God's essence, it must be that the mind's whole attention is called there, so that it understands nothing else from phantasms, but is totally carried to God. Hence it is impossible that a man in this life should see God in his essence without abstraction from the senses.[221]

Aquinas recalled that the intellect knew individual things by working back through intelligible species and phantasms. He then made the point that the intellect could not know God's essence through the medium of anything created. It could not therefore know God's essence

[217] See J. M. Cocking, *Imagination: A Study in the History of Ideas* (London, 1991), p. 155; I. P. Wei, 'Predicting the future to judge the present: Paris theologians and attitudes to the future', in J. A. Burrow and I. P. Wei (eds.), *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 19–36 at 33–5.

[218] On the relationship between prophecy and rapture, see ST 2a2ae.175.3 (vol. 45, p. 105).

[219] 2 Corinthians 12.2.

[220] ST 2a2ae.175.1 (vol. 45, p. 97).

[221] ST 2a2ae.175.4 (vol. 45, p. 109). I have substantially altered the translation, in part aided by *The 'Summa Theologica' of St. Thomas Aquinas: Second Part of the Second Part QQ. CLXXI–CLXXXIX*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1934), pp. 71–2.

through intelligible species and phantasms because they were created. Moreover, it could not simultaneously know God's essence directly and other things using phantasms. Since both intelligible species and phantasms originated in the senses, being removed from them meant also being removed or abstracted from the senses. It went without saying that, like prophecy, rapture could never be taught.

Teaching, however, was fundamental to the purpose of the university, and Aquinas analysed the process of teaching in the light of his ideas about knowing when he considered whether one man could teach another. He began his analysis by recalling Aristotle's view that 'the passive intellect of the human soul is in a state of pure potentiality with regard to intelligible impressions', from which it followed that the teacher caused knowledge in the student by 'reducing' his passive intellect 'from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality'. Aquinas further noted that effects coming from an external source could come either from that external source alone or sometimes from an external source and sometimes from an internal source. Teaching fell into this latter category, so he elaborated on what it meant, using the example of health and medicine. Good health in a sick person was sometimes caused by an external source, the art of medicine, and sometimes by an internal source, the power of nature. He made two further points about instances when effects came from both external and internal sources, continuing to use the medical example. First, 'art imitates nature in its workings'; thus 'just as nature cures a sick man by altering and digesting and expelling the matter causing his sickness, so does the art of medicine'. Second, the external cause, the art, 'does not operate as principal agency, but rather as an aid to the principal agency (namely, the internal cause), by supporting it and providing it with the means it uses to produce the effect'; thus the physician provided food and medicine that nature could use to bring about a cure.[222]

Aquinas then considered knowledge within this framework. It could be acquired from an internal source, 'as is clear in the case of one who acquires knowledge through his own research'. Here the cause of knowledge was the light of the agent intellect 'through which certain universal principles of all the branches of knowledge are known naturally and immediately'. When a man applied these principles to specific cases, known through sense perception, he acquired 'knowledge by his own research of things of which he was ignorant, thus proceeding from the known to the unknown'. Knowledge could also be acquired from an external source, through being taught, and there were two ways in

[222] ST 1a.117.2 (vol. 15, pp. 131–3).

which the master could lead his disciple 'from the already known to the unknown'. First, he could present the disciple with intellectual tools which his intellect could use to acquire knowledge, 'as when he puts before him certain less universal propositions on which the learner can form a judgment from previous knowledge, or as when he puts to him concrete examples ... from which the learner's mind is led on to knowledge of the truth of what was previously unknown'. Second, the master could set out 'the relationship of principles to conclusions' when his disciple perhaps lacked the ability to work it out for himself.[223] The disciple learned chiefly because of what happened within himself, while the master provided 'only external help, in the same way as the physician who heals'.[224]

Aquinas acknowledged, however, that some people would have to be taught simply to accept truths that others could prove through reason. What others genuinely understood, they would have to believe as matters of faith. This was partly so that people could obtain knowledge of divine truth more quickly. Proving God's existence and other things about him was an aspect of metaphysics, which was the last science to be studied because it presupposed many others. People could not be allowed to come to knowledge of God only after much of their life was over. It was also necessary to ensure that knowledge of God was more widespread. Many people could not get anywhere with study, either because they lacked the intelligence, or they had to work to support themselves, or they were lazy, and they would never have knowledge of God unless it were presented to them as a matter of faith. Finally, it was important that people should have certainty. Human reason was thoroughly deficient with regard to divine matters, and philosophers made mistakes and disagreed with each other even over human issues. Divine truths had to be taught through faith to provide certain knowledge about God.[225] Aquinas was intensely aware that teaching had to be conducted at different levels for different audiences.

The serious scholar, however, had to think hard about how he approached his study. Aquinas defined *studiositas* as a virtue which moderated the natural desire to know, and was linked in a subordinate capacity to temperance.[226] Opposed to *studiositas* was the vice of *curiositas* which was concerned not directly with knowing, but with 'the appetite and eagerness to acquire knowledge'.[227] Aquinas explained

[223] ST 1a.117.2 (vol. 15, pp. 133–5).
[224] ST 1a.117.2.ad1 (vol 15, p. 135).
[225] ST 2a2ae.2.4 (vol. 31, pp. 77–9).
[226] ST 2a2ae.166.2 (vol. 44, pp. 197).
[227] ST 2a2ae.160.2 (vol. 44, p. 87); ST 2a2ae.167.1 (vol. 44, pp. 202–3); my translation.

that knowing the truth was good in itself, but could be bad accidentally. It could be bad because of some consequence, 'as when somebody swells with pride' or 'when somebody uses knowledge of the truth in order to sin'. There could also be vice, the vice of *curiositas*, because of 'inordinateness of the appetite and eagerness to learn the truth'. This inordinateness could arise in four ways: first, 'when attention to the less useful distracts people from the studies incumbent on their office'; second, 'when a person studies from an illicit source'; third, 'when a person strives to know the truth about creatures without heeding its rightful end, namely knowing about God'; and fourth, 'when a person applies himself to grasp truths beyond his capacity', because people easily fell into error by doing this.[228] It was important that the scholar maintained a correct sense of purpose and did not get carried away in pursuit of knowledge.

Aquinas also discussed the context in which study and teaching took place, showing his sensitivity to the criticisms that the friars received from the secular clergy. Was it licit for religious to teach, preach and perform other tasks of this kind? He maintained that it was entirely permissible because they were 'not obliged by any vow or any precept of their rule to refrain from such things', nor were they 'less suited for doing them because of any sin committed'. It was also proper for them to receive holy orders or whatever jurisdiction was necessary. Moreover, they were especially suited to this kind of work because they had embraced 'the practice of holiness'.[229] Aquinas thus invoked the idea that a life ordered to virtue was fundamental to scholarship and teaching. He offered an interesting variation on this theme when considering whether a religious order should be founded for study, an issue especially pertinent to the Dominicans. He argued that study was indeed fitting for a religious order for three reasons. First, he maintained that study promoted the contemplative life in two ways: 'directly, by disposing for contemplation through illumination of the intellect', and 'indirectly, by removing the dangers of contemplation of divine things by those who are ignorant of Scripture'. Second, he argued that 'the study of letters is necessary for a religious order founded for preaching and similar works', so the pastoral value of learning was emphasized. Third, he explained that 'study befits a religious order as regards that which is common to all religious orders' in that 'it helps to avoid concupiscence of the flesh', 'it eliminates the desire for wealth' and 'it teaches obedience'.[230] Aquinas therefore held

[228] ST 2a2ae.167.1 (vol. 44, pp. 203–5); I have adapted the translation.
[229] ST 2a2ae.187.1 (vol. 47, pp. 147–9).
[230] ST 2a2ae.188.5 (vol. 47, pp. 199–201); I have adapted the translation.

that study aided both contemplation and pastoral work. Moreover, he reversed the usual relationship between learning and virtue, arguing that learning bred virtue.

There remained the further question of what should be presented to a wider audience that included the uneducated. Should there be public disputations with infidels? With regard to the disputant, intention was the key issue. If he disputed 'as though he had doubts about the faith and did not hold its truth for certain but proposed to test it with arguments', he certainly sinned as someone who doubted the faith and was himself an infidel. His actions were praiseworthy, however, if he disputed to refute errors or even to develop his skills. Matters were more complicated when it came to the audience, and it was necessary to consider whether they were instructed and firm in faith, or simple and hesitant. There was no danger in disputing about the faith before those who were wise and secure in faith, but an audience of simple people required more careful assessment. If they were troubled by infidels, for example by Jews, heretics or pagans, who were trying to corrupt their faith, it was necessary to dispute publicly about the faith as long as suitable men could be found who were capable of refuting errors. In this instance, the simple would be strengthened in their faith, and infidels would no longer have the power to deceive. Moreover, error would be confirmed if there were silence from those who were supposed to resist perversion of the faith. If, however, simple people were not at all troubled in this regard, as in lands where there were no infidels, it was dangerous to dispute publicly about the faith before them. Their faith was firmer because they had heard nothing contrary to what they believed, and it would do them no good to hear how infidels attacked the faith. Aquinas thus maintained that unless an audience was well informed or already shaken in its beliefs, public disputation about the faith was best avoided.[231] Once again he displayed great sensitivity to the potential needs of different types of audience, and he defined the master's responsibilities accordingly.

Aquinas presented a theory of knowing in which he was hugely influenced by Aristotle, and in which all natural knowledge was based more or less directly on sense perception. Through grace, however, God could strengthen the natural process by which the agent intellect abstracted quiddities and intelligible species from phantasms. Moreover, God could also act outside the natural process to reveal knowledge directly, for example though prophecy. He could even lift an individual entirely out of sense-based knowing and into rapture, so that the intellect saw God

[231] ST 2a2ae.10.7 (vol. 32, pp. 57–9).

in his essence. Aquinas did not doubt the value of knowledge generated in the university, and he explained the processes of study and teaching in terms of natural knowing. When the master taught his student, he supported the natural processes operating within his pupil, and in this he was like a physician healing his patient. There were, however, moral issues to consider. The scholar had to pursue useful knowledge, shun inappropriate sources of knowledge, remember that the point of studying the created world was to know about God, and be aware of his own limitations. In short, he must resist *curiositas* and moderate his desire to know by practising the virtue of *studiositas*. In general, living virtuously was necessary for sound scholarship, but study also fostered virtue. It was necessary to remember, however, that many people needed to be taught to believe the truth rather than to understand it fully, and it was potentially dangerous to hold disputations about the faith in public. The master always had a responsibility to assess his audience and to teach accordingly.

Conflict and condemnation

Aquinas and Bonaventure both insisted on the importance of virtue if true knowledge was to be obtained, and Aquinas was especially keen to stress the master's responsibility for the reception of his teaching by different types of audience; they both therefore adhered to the values that the university had adopted from twelfth-century monks. Moreover, they both stressed the importance of scholarship and learning, attaching high value to the work of the university. It will be apparent, however, that Bonaventure and Aquinas were very different in their ideas about knowing. Both believed that sense-based knowledge of the created world made it possible to know something about God, but while for Aquinas this was the basis for all natural knowledge of God, Bonaventure held that much rational thought required introspection that was not sense-based. Looking within, Bonaventure found innate ideas that were much more valuable, whereas Aquinas did not think that innate ideas existed. Aquinas drew systematically upon Aristotle's thinking, so that his interpretation of Aristotle was significant at every level of his work, while Bonaventure was much more selective in the way he deployed Aristotelian principles, continuing to rely much more heavily on Augustine for his basic framework. Aquinas and Bonaventure developed these fundamentally different approaches while the reception of newly translated Aristotelian texts caused bitter conflicts within the

University of Paris. In 1255 the arts faculty issued a statute requiring that all Aristotle's known works be studied, almost certainly reflecting what had been the practice for some time.[232] By now many of the works of the twelfth-century Muslim scholar, Averroes, had also been translated and were available in Paris, and his interpretations of Aristotle were also being used. A number of masters of arts specialized in the analysis of Aristotle's work, and they did not consider it their brief to find a way of bringing Aristotle's ideas into line with Christian belief, still less to create some kind of synthesis. The extent to which they intended to challenge Christian orthodoxy was and is far from clear. Historians disagree also about whether there was a 'school' or 'movement', but they have referred to elements within the arts faculty as 'radical Aristotelians', 'heterodox Aristotelians' and 'Latin Averroists'. There is no doubt, however, that some arts masters, notably Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, were articulating ideas that were incompatible with Christian belief, and that they did not devote much time to criticizing them from a Christian perspective. Many others, especially in the faculty of theology, were horrified, and considered it their duty to take action.

One of the most controversial issues concerned what is usually termed the unity (or sometimes the 'unicity') of the intellect. According to Siger of Brabant, Aristotle argued that there was just one potential intellect shared by everyone. Albert the Great and Bonaventure had already taken Averroes to advocate this view in his commentary on Aristotle, and they had argued against it. Siger, however, did not explicitly reject it. In 1270, without naming Siger, Aquinas attacked his work in a treatise entitled *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists*. He explained the context at the start of the treatise:

> For a long time now there has been spreading among many people an error concerning the intellect, arising from the words of Averroes. He tries to assert that the intellect that Aristotle calls the possible intellect, but that he himself calls by the unsuitable name 'material', is a substance separate in its being from the body and not united to it in some way as its form, and furthermore that this possible intellect is one for all men. Against these views we have already written many things in the past. But because the boldness of those who err has not ceased to strive against the truth, we will try again to write something against this same error to refute it clearly.[233]

[232] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 246, pp. 277–9; *University Records*, no. 28, pp. 64–6.
[233] Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists (De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averroistas)*, trans. B. H. Zedler (Milwaukee, 1968), pp. 21–2.

In his treatise Aquinas aimed 'to show that the above-mentioned position is no less against the principles of philosophy than against the teachings of faith'.[234] The issue was contentious, however, because the notion of a single potential intellect undermined key Christian beliefs. As Aquinas explained: 'if we deny to men a diversity of the intellect, which alone among the parts of the soul seems to be incorruptible and immortal, it follows that after death nothing of the souls of men would remain except that single substance of intellect; and so the recompense of rewards and punishments and also their diversity would be destroyed'.[235] If there were only one intellect for everyone, individuals would not survive as individuals after death, and they could not therefore receive the specific punishments or rewards that were their due in the next life. This was not a matter on which theologians could permit any vagueness whatsoever.

A second cause of controversy was Aristotle's view about the eternity of the world. He argued that the world was eternal in its origins, that it had no beginning, an idea rehearsed by both Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia. This plainly contradicted the account of creation in Genesis. Bonaventure dismissed the view of anyone who supported Aristotle as contradictory:

> It is impossible for that which has being after non-being to have eternal being, because this implies a contradiction. But the world has being after non-being. Therefore it is impossible that it be eternal.[236]

Aquinas, however, maintained that while arguments in favour of the eternity of the world were flawed, so were those that could be advanced in an attempt to prove that it had a beginning. The truth on this matter had to be accepted as a matter of faith: 'we hold by faith alone that the world has not existed forever; this truth cannot be proved demonstratively'.[237] One of his key points was that the efficient cause in this matter was the will of God, and this was not open to rational investigation:

> God's will cannot be investigated by reason, except as regards those matters which God must will with absolute necessity; such however, are not those things which he wills with reference to creatures, as we said above. But the divine will can be made known to man by revelation, on which faith is based.

[234] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[235] *Ibid.*
[236] Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 2.1.1.1.2, in St Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant, St Bonaventure, *On the Eternity of the World (De Aeternitate Mundi)*, trans. C. Vollert, L. H. Kendzierski, P. M. Byrne (Milwaukee, 1964), p. 109.
[237] ST 1a.46.2, in Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant, Bonaventure, *On the Eternity of the World*, p. 65.

That the world had a beginning, therefore, is an object of faith, but not of demonstration or science.[238]

Furthermore, Aquinas considered it dangerous to put forward unconvincing arguments on the matter since 'this would furnish infidels with an occasion for scoffing, as they would think that we assent to truths of faith on such grounds'.[239] Theologians who felt obliged to counter ideas emerging from the arts faculty were far from in harmony with each other.

Indeed Bonaventure and Aquinas responded very differently to the crisis over some of the teaching in the arts faculty, and in ways that reveal much about their fundamental approaches to scholarship and teaching. Although Aquinas was clear that natural reason had its limits, hence for example his view that it was impossible to prove by reason that the world had a beginning, he had supreme confidence that the results of correct reasoning would never conflict with faith:

Although the truth of the Christian faith exceeds the capacity of human reason, truths that reason is fitted by nature to know cannot be contrary to the truth of faith. The things that reason is fitted by nature to know are clearly most true, and it would be impossible to think of them as false. It is also wrong to think that something that is held by faith could be false since it is clearly confirmed by God. Since we know by definition that what is false is contrary to the truth, it is impossible for the principles that reason knows by nature to be contrary to the truth of faith ... We conclude therefore that any arguments made against the doctrines of faith are incorrectly derived from the self-evident first principles of nature. Such conclusions do not have the force of proofs, but are either doubtful opinions or sophistries, and so it is possible to answer them.[240]

If an argument based on reason conflicted with faith, Aquinas was sure that the argument was flawed. Once the argument had been corrected, there would be no problem. So when masters of arts like Siger seemed to offer rational support for heterodox views, he set about proving that their arguments were wrong.

Bonaventure's response, however, was to play down the significance of reason, and demand that others do the same. For most of his career, he had probably regarded the Paris curriculum as a perfectly acceptable programme of study. In response to turbulence within his order, *The Soul's Journey into God* offered a serene and all-embracing vision: everything had a part to play in seeking knowledge of God, including

[238] *Ibid.*, p. 66. [239] *Ibid.*
[240] SCG 1.7, in Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*, pp. 4–5; see also Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Pegis, vol. 1, pp. 74–5.

the sciences and pagan learning. The ascent indicated their relative importance, and how they fitted together. When, however, there was controversy and crisis at the University of Paris, this was not enough and Bonaventure expressed his priorities very forcefully. In 1273 he produced his *Conferences on the Hexaemeron*. He condemned 'the darkness of curiosity' and declared that it was 'patently obvious ... that there is no sure passage to wisdom through science'.[241] He attacked those who preferred the study of science to wisdom:

Some wish to be all-wise and all-knowing, but it happens to them just as to the woman: 'And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes' (Genesis 3.6). They see the beauty of transitory science and being delighted, they linger, they savour, and they are [deceived]. We do not belong to the party of their companions, the disciples of Solomon, but to that of David his father, who preferred the study of sanctity and wisdom to that of science.[242]

Science was dangerously tempting: 'unless it is watched very carefully, there is easy ruin in science'. A sense of religious purpose had always to be maintained: 'We should desire to know nothing unless we become more holy and go forward in the wisdom which takes us toward God.'[243]

Bonaventure did not suggest that study should be abandoned, but it had to be conducted in the proper manner. Above all, order had to be observed. He noted that there were four types of text to be studied: 'the books of the Holy Scriptures'; 'the books of the originals, namely the saints', by which he meant the writings of the Fathers; 'the summas of the masters'; and 'the writings of worldly learning', by which he meant pagan philosophy.[244] Bonaventure gave absolute priority to the Bible:

Thus, let him who wishes to learn, seek science at its source, namely, in Holy Scripture, since 'the knowledge of salvation given for the remission of our sins' (Luke 1.77) is not found among the philosophers, nor among the summas of the masters, since they draw from the originals of the saints. But certain science cannot be taken from the originals beyond what the saints draw from Holy Scripture, since the saints could be deceived.[245]

It followed that 'the disciple of Christ ought first to study Holy Scripture, in which there is no error'. Moreover, familiarity with the whole of the Bible was required.[246]

That did not mean, however, that it was pointless to study the other kinds of text. The writings of the Fathers had to be studied because

[241] Bonaventure, *Conferences on the Hexameron*, vision 3, discussion 7, in Hyman and Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 417–18.
[242] *Ibid.*, p. 418. [243] *Ibid.*
[244] *Ibid.*, p. 419. [245] *Ibid.* [246] *Ibid.*

it was impossible to understand the Bible without them. But they too were extremely difficult, with the result that 'some studying them have fallen into many errors and heresies'.[247] It was therefore necessary to turn to the summas of the masters for explanation. The summas of the masters, however, cited many philosophers, so they also had to be studied. This movement away from the Bible was fraught with increasing danger.

> Thus there is danger in descending to the originals; there is more danger in descending to the summas of the masters; but the greatest danger lies in descending to philosophy.[248]

The writings of the Fathers might be wrongly preferred to the Bible because they contained 'pretty words'. The summas of the masters could be deeply misleading because the masters sometimes misunderstood the Fathers. Philosophy, however, was most dangerous of all because it led some to neglect of the Bible. The answer was to 'drink moderately from philosophy'. Bonaventure condemned those who gave themselves 'entirely to philosophy'; they were 'bent over in submission to infinite errors, (treating) the sayings of certain philosophers as though they were the life-giving ferment of Scripture'. Francis had set the right example: when the sultan treated faith as a matter for debate, Francis told him that 'faith is above reason and is proved only by the authority of Scripture and the divine power, which is manifested in miracles'. Bonaventure concluded that 'the water of philosophical science is not to be mingled with the wine of Holy Scripture merely so that the wine is transmitted into water'.[249] The order was thus perfectly clear, but unfortunately contemporary practice was seriously at fault.

> The order thus is that first of all the letter and the spirit of Holy Scripture is studied, and then the originals are read, and they are subordinated to Scripture. Likewise in passing over to the study of the writings of the philosophers; but the contrary is always done, since the professors, even if not openly, secretly read, copy, and conceal the quartos of the philosophers as though they were idols.[250]

Bonaventure had strong views about how learning should be pursued within both the Franciscan order and the university. Complete preoccupation with the study of pagan philosophy was dangerous, and a proper sense of order should be re-established.

Bonaventure was not the only one to take this view, and some believed that authoritative intervention was required. In 1270, on 10 December,

[247] *Ibid.* [248] *Ibid.*
[249] *Ibid.*, pp. 419–20. [250] *Ibid.*, p. 420.

the bishop of Paris, Stephen Tempier, condemned thirteen propositions including the view that there was only one intellect for everyone, and the claim that the world was eternal.[251] In 1277 Pope John XXI called for further action, asking the bishop to conduct an investigation into errors being propagated in the university. A commission of theologians rapidly produced a report, and on 7 March the bishop issued a condemnation of 219 propositions.[252] The list was a bizarre and puzzling mish-mash. While it seems to have been aimed at arts masters like Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, it failed to represent their views accurately. It also included propositions that no Parisian scholar is known to have put forward anywhere in the university. Moreover, it even condemned some views that had formed part of the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, who had died in 1274, prompting bitter exchanges in Paris between Dominican defenders of Aquinas and Franciscan critics over the next few years.[253]

The long-term significance of these condemnations, especially those of 1277, has been much disputed. For some historians the condemnations of 1277 were a watershed in the intellectual history of western Europe, changing the direction of medieval thought, whereas for others they did not seriously interrupt or redirect ongoing processes of intellectual inquiry.[254] Much depends on whether historians choose to emphasize conflict or cooperation in their accounts of thirteenth-century intellectual culture. For those who construct narratives of conflict, the reception of Aristotle and his Arab commentators created bitter divisions between 'radical' Aristotelians in the arts faculty and 'traditional' theologians who remained wedded to Augustine. Aquinas is located in the middle as the man who tried to 'synthesize' Aristotelian philosophy and Christian faith. The condemnations of 1277 are held to have marked the defeat of the extremists in the arts faculty, to have

[251] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 432, pp. 486–7; *University Records*, no. 38, pp. 80–1.
[252] *Chartularium*, vol. 1, no. 473, pp. 543–58. Partially translated in Hyman and Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 542–9.
[253] For detailed analysis of the 1277 condemnation, see Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*, pp. 165–230; R. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 mars 1277* (Louvain, 1977); M. M. McLaughlin, *Intellectual Freedom and its Limitations in the University of Paris in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York, 1977), pp. 74–95; J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris 1200–1400* (Philadelphia, 1998), pp. 40–56; L. E. Wilshire, 'The condemnations of 1277 and the intellectual climate of the medieval university', in N. Van Deusen (ed.), *The Intellectual Climate of the Early University: Essays in Honor of Otto Gründler* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1997), pp. 151–93.
[254] Contrast, for example, D. E. Luscombe, *Medieval Thought* (Oxford, 1997), esp. pp. 114–21, and Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy*, esp. pp. 73–4. For a summary of different interpretations, see Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*, pp. 203–7.

set back the approach pioneered by Aquinas, and even to have closed a period of freedom of thought.[255] Other historians, however, question whether the work of Siger of Brabant and a few others added up to a significant movement, and point out that the overwhelming majority of arts masters deferred to theology as the superior discipline, and prepared their students for potential study of theology in the future, making cooperation between faculties the dominant feature of intellectual life in the university.[256]

Without doubt Parisian masters developed very different theories about knowing, as we have seen by examining the work of Bonaventure and Aquinas. Because this bore upon matters of faith, so that differences were deemed important, there were frequent controversies, and leading figures were therefore involved in well-publicized conflicts. It should be noted, however, that these conflicts were played out within the university, albeit with occasional intervention from external ecclesiastical authority. While formal censure of academic work rested on the authority of the bishop and chancellor, cases were effectively decided by the regent masters of theology as a body. Even when religious orders took action against their own members in the second half of the thirteenth century, and cases began to go directly to the papal courts in the early fourteenth, special commissions of theologians from Paris played a decisive role in evaluating suspect views.[257] Whereas in the twelfth century conflicts had taken place between men in different contexts of learning, between schoolmen and monks, now battles were fought between men whose identity had been substantially formed by the university. As a result, however extreme the language in which they criticized each other, they had a good deal in common. Moreover, whatever their disagreements about how knowledge was acquired and whatever conclusions they drew using their chosen methods, they all agreed that it was possible to know truths. The notion that knowing the truth required virtuous behaviour was built into university statutes and

[255] For very different, but equally brilliant, narratives of conflict, see E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London, 1955); Van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*.

[256] See, for example, Marenbon, *Later Medieval Thought*, esp. pp. 67, 73–4. Marenbon also summarizes narratives of conflict very effectively.

[257] W. J. Courtenay, 'Inquiry and inquisition: academic freedom in medieval universities', *Church History* 58 (1989): 168–81 at pp. 173–7; W. J. Courtenay, 'Dominicans and suspect opinion in the thirteenth century: the cases of Stephen of Venizy, Peter of Tarentaise, and the articles of 1270 and 1271', *Vivarium* 32 (1994): 186–95. For detailed analysis of procedures and different forms of censure, and for differing assessments of the impact of censure on academic freedom, see also Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*, pp. 21–67; Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy*, esp. pp. 1–39.

articulated by masters of theology. In justifying the university's existence, key documents also explained that it turned men into preachers, asserting the overriding importance of its pastoral role. The university's standing as a locus of intellectual and moral authority was not disputed. Masters of theology devoted much time and effort to consideration of how the university's pastoral role was to be fulfilled, and working out what people outside the university needed to know in order to be saved in the next life. Whether the intellectual culture of the thirteenth-century university should be characterized in terms of conflict or cooperation must depend at least in part on the balance between disagreement and consensus in their consideration of their pastoral role and in the substance of their pastoral teaching.

4 Communication and control

In the second half of the twelfth century, the Parisian theologians placed greatest emphasis on moral theology and pastoral mission. All too often this has been presented as a period of intellectual decline; the scholars of this period supposedly had second-rate minds, and we have to wait until the thirteenth century for things to become interesting again. This, however, is to judge their work from a perspective that was not shared by Parisian scholars themselves, not even those of the first half of the twelfth century. Repeatedly ethics and moral theology were presented as the ultimate goals of academic study. Thus, in Peter Abelard's *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*, the Philosopher declares at the very start that the whole point of his long study of the various other disciplines was finally to study moral philosophy:

> So having devoted myself to our schools for a long time, and having been educated in both their reasons and their authorities, at last I brought myself to moral philosophy, which is the aim of all the disciplines and for the sake of which I judged all the rest should be mere preliminaries.[1]

Later, in the exchange between the Philosopher and the Christian, the latter refers to ethics as 'the goal and summation of all disciplines', renaming it 'divinity' in the context of Christian study in order to stress the goal of understanding God rather than the means of getting there:

> we're really proceeding now toward the goal and summation of all disciplines. Surely the discipline you have usually called 'ethics' – that is, morals – we have usually called 'divinity'. That is, whereas we call it such from what it is directed at comprehending, namely God, you do so from the means by which it arrives there, namely the moral goods you call 'virtues'.[2]

[1] Peter Abelard, *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*, in *Ethical Writings*, trans. P. V. Spade (Indianapolis, 1995), preface, p. 59.
[2] *Ibid.*, 2.148, p. 93.

The Philosopher then declares that compared with ethics 'all the other arts' teachings become vile'. They only have value in so far as they perform an ancillary role, assisting the scholar to reach the ultimate form of study.

> Nothing fruitful is apparent in them, except to the extent that they serve this ultimate philosophy like busy maidservants around their mistress. For what is there to the study of grammar, dialectic or the other arts that has to do with seeking out true human blessedness? They all lie far below this pinnacle and aren't strong enough to raise themselves up to such a peak. But they do deal with certain kinds of speech or busy themselves with some of the natures of things, as if providing certain steps up to this loftiness. For we must speak about it and make it known by using some of the natures of things as an example or analogy. Thus through them we reach it, as though reaching the mistress through a kind of escort by the maidservants.[3]

John of Salisbury exhibited exactly the same priorities in his *Metalogicon*: 'Of all branches of learning, that which confers the greatest beauty is Ethics, the most excellent part of philosophy, without which the latter would not even deserve its name.'[4] This attitude was much in evidence when he criticized his contemporaries for being obsessed with dialectic on its own rather than deploying it to address moral issues:

> Dialectic, pure and simple, hardly ever investigates such questions as: 'Is pleasure good?' 'Should virtue be preferred to aught else?' 'Do good habits exist in the highest state?' and 'Should one labour when one is in need?' But upon the answer to problems such as these, depends whether or not our life will result in the attainment of happiness and salvation.[5]

In the thirteenth century theologians used Aristotelian concepts to discuss the nature and purpose of theology. Was theology a science? Increasingly they decided that it was, in which case they had to consider whether it was a practical science or a theoretical science.[6] Characteristically, Thomas Aquinas gave a distinctive twist to the debate. In Aristotelian terms, a science had to be based on self-evident first principles. Drawing on Aristotle, Aquinas argued that this criterion might be met in different ways, so that some sciences rested on

[3] *Ibid.*, 2.152, pp. 93–4.
[4] John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, trans. D. D. McGarry (Berkeley, 1955), 1.24, p. 67.
[5] *Ibid.*, 2.11, pp. 100–1.
[6] For accounts of thirteenth-century discussions of theology as a science, see M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie comme science au xiiie siècle* (Paris, 1957); G. Turner, 'St Thomas Aquinas on the "scientific" nature of theology', *New Blackfriars* 78 (1997): 464–76.

first principles that were known by natural understanding, while others derived their first principles from other higher sciences:

> sciences are of two kinds: some work from premises recognized in the innate light of intelligence, for instance arithmetic, geometry, and sciences of the same sort; while others work from premises recognized in the light of a higher science, for instance optics starts out from principles marked out by geometry, and harmony from principles indicated by arithmetic.[7]

Theology, according to Aquinas, was a science of the second type, a 'subalternated' science, because it was based on principles derived from a superior source, specifically those that God chose to reveal:

> In this second manner is Christian theology a science, for it flows from founts recognized in the light of a higher science, namely God's very own which he shares with the blessed. Hence as harmony credits its principles which are taken from arithmetic, so Christian theology takes on faith its principles revealed by God.[8]

Aquinas further maintained that theology was 'a single science':

> Now since holy Scripture looks at things in that they are divinely revealed ... all things whatsoever that can be divinely revealed share in the same formal objective meaning. On that account they are included under theology as under a single science.[9]

This was important to bear in mind when considering whether theology was a practical or a theoretical science. It could be argued that theology was a practical science because 'Aristotle says that "a practical science is that which ends in action"', and 'Christian theology is for action, according to St James, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only".'[10] Against this, it could be argued that theology was 'more contemplative than practical' because 'every practical science is concerned with what men can do and make, thus ethics is about human acts and architecture about building. Christian theology, however, is about God, who makes men and is not made by them'.[11] Bearing in mind that theology was a single science, Aquinas held that it was both theoretical and practical:

[7] ST 1a.1.2 (vol. 1, p. 11). For the Aristotelian origins of the notion of a subalternated science, see Chenu, *La théologie comme science*, p. 72, n. 1; Turner, 'St Thomas Aquinas on the "scientific" nature of theology', p. 468.
[8] ST 1a.1.2 (vol. 1, p. 11).
[9] ST 1a.1.3 (vol. 1, pp. 13–15). I have adjusted the translation to maintain consist use of key terms.
[10] ST 1a.1.4.ad1 (vol. 1, p. 15), citing Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2.1 993b21, and James 1.22.
[11] ST 1a.1.4.sed contra (vol. 1, p. 17).

> Whereas some among the philosophical sciences are theoretical and others are practical, theology takes over both functions, in this being like the single knowledge whereby God knows himself and the things he makes.[12]

It was, however, 'more theoretical than practical' because 'it is mainly concerned with the divine things which are, rather than with things men do; it deals with human acts only in so far as they prepare men for that achieved knowledge of God on which their eternal bliss reposes'.[13] Aquinas thus contrived to set the contemplative above the practical, while including moral theology and the saving of souls as part of theology's fundamental purpose. For many of his colleagues, however, the practical outweighed the theoretical. Bonaventure, for example, said that the point of theology was both to further contemplation and to make us good, but chiefly the latter.[14] However they viewed the relative status of the practical and the theoretical within theology, thirteenth-century theologians used Aristotelian epistemology to demonstrate that the practical was always an essential goal. So when Parisian masters addressed moral questions, they were not failing to have anything to say about the really exciting issues; rather they were following the idea that this should be the culmination of all study, an idea that was deeply embedded in their sense of their own calling.

Moreover, while moral philosophy and theology were presented as the culmination of study, we should not be misled into thinking that they turned to these matters only in the later stages of their academic careers. On the contrary, they had been studying ethics from their earliest days in the schools because it was taught as part of grammar and rhetoric. These subjects were taught by commentary on classical texts, and masters were expected to explain passages that raised questions of morality, a practice entirely in line with ancient Roman pedagogy. The result was that works of moral theology contained citations, extracts, precepts and examples drawn from the pagan texts that were deemed to possess authority in grammar and rhetoric.[15] Once Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics* became available for study, these too formed key elements

[12] ST 1a.1.4 (vol. 1, p. 17). I have adjusted the translation to maintain consist use of key terms.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, 1; *Opera Omnia* 1 (Quaracchi, 1882), Prooemium, quaestio 3, pp. 12–13.
[15] P. Delhaye, 'L'enseignement de la philosophie morale au XIIe siècle', *Mediaeval Studies* 11 (1949): 77–99, reprinted in *Enseignement et Morale au XIIe Siècle* (Fribourg, 1988), pp. 59–81; P. Delhaye, '<<Grammatica>> et <<Ethica>> au xiie siècle', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 25 (1958): 59–110, reprinted in *Enseignement et Morale*, pp. 83–134. For a longer-term perspective, see C. S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 118–79.

of an education in the faculty of arts, and were hugely important for many theologians.[16] Moral concerns thus permeated scholarly endeavour from start to finish.

In order to understand the significance of their ethical and moral teaching, the first part of this chapter will explore the ways in which thirteenth-century masters of theology saw themselves and their role in relation to the rest of society. The second part will show how they developed a number of fundamental ideas that made it seem possible to save people from eternal damnation provided that they paid heed to the masters' expert advice on all aspects of human life. Thus the masters' thinking about the afterlife, especially purgatory, the ethical significance of intention and the role of the devil, all served to construct the notion of individual Christians whose personal responsibility for their own salvation would prompt them to seek or accept authoritative rulings on what was licit and illicit in all their actions. The third part of the chapter will set out the chief means by which the masters expected that their authoritative teaching would be communicated beyond the university. The masters of Paris played a key role in what has been called 'a pastoral revolution', and the prospect of saving souls throughout Christendom by their intellectual and pedagogical efforts must have generated a sense of excitement quite as intoxicating as that gained from the study of newly translated texts from the past.

Self-image

The masters regarded their analysis of moral issues and the communication of their views as fundamental aspects of their work that gave them a distinctive and authoritative role in society. This is clear from quodlibetal disputations held in the second half of the thirteenth century, during which they were often asked about themselves and the problems that they faced.[17] They were in effect invited to justify themselves, and as a result quodlibetal questions reveal much about the way in which the masters of theology perceived themselves and the value that they attached to their work.

[16] On the reception of Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*, see P. Biller, *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 50–2, 296–311; J. Dunbabin, 'The reception and interpretation of Aristotle's *Politics*', in N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny and J. Pinborg (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 723–37; G. Wieland, 'The reception and interpretation of Aristotle's *Ethics*', in Kretzmann, Kenny and Pinborg (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 657–72.

[17] See n. 181 below for the nature of quodlibetal disputations.

In 1269, for example, Aquinas tackled an issue that was put to many masters in one form or another. How could they justify remaining in the schools rather than working directly to save souls? Aquinas was asked whether someone was bound to give up studying theology to pursue the salvation of souls, even if he were fit to teach others.[18] Using an image derived from Aristotle, he responded by comparing the master of theology with an architect.[19] By contrast, the ordinary priests who had direct responsibility for the cure of souls were like manual labourers. In any construction, Aquinas explained, the architect who arranged the construction was more important than a manual worker who followed instructions. Thus in the construction of buildings the architect was more highly paid than the manual workers who hewed planks and cut stone. In the work of spiritual construction, those who were directly concerned with the cure of souls, for example by administering the sacraments, were like manual workers. However, both bishops, who arranged how these priests should carry out their duty, and the doctors of theology, who investigated the means of salvation and taught them to others, were like architects. It was therefore better to teach sacred doctrine, and more meritorious if done with good intention, than to be concerned with the salvation of individuals. It was also better to instruct in matters pertaining to salvation those who could benefit both themselves and others rather than simple folk who could only benefit themselves. Aquinas added just one qualification: in certain cases of necessity both bishops and doctors would have to lay aside their office and attend directly to the salvation of souls. This was not, however, the ordinary state of affairs. Normally the masters, too exalted to attend directly to the cure of souls, were responsible for those who did. Like bishops, they had a definite status within a hierarchy. But whereas bishops ruled, the masters carried out a process of inquiry which resulted in teaching. Operating at a higher level of understanding, they passed on the fruits of their learning and thus played a crucial role in ensuring right order within the church.

[18] Quodlibet I.14. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de quolibet*, Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia 25, 2 vols. (Rome, 1996), vol. 2, pp. 194–7. See E. Marmursztejn, 'A normative power in the making: theological *quodlibeta* and the authority of the masters at Paris at the end of the thirteenth century', in C. Schabel (ed.), *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Thirteenth Century* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 345–402 at 358–9; E. Marmursztejn, *L'autorité des maîtres: scolastique, normes et société au xiiie siècle* (Paris, 2007), pp. 49–54; I. P. Wei, 'The self-image of the masters of theology at the university of Paris in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995): 398–431 at 409–10.

[19] On the Aristotelian origins of the metaphor of the architect, see Marmursztejn, 'A normative power in the making', p. 358, n. 37.

Henry of Ghent was another master who faced numerous questions about the magisterial life, and he too had to justify his continuing presence in the schools. In 1276, for example, he was asked whether a man with sufficient instruction should remain in the schools in the hope of further profit, rather than leaving to work for the salvation of souls.[20] Henry's response was a painstaking yet passionate justification of the magisterial career in which he examined the circumstances in which it should be assumed and the reasons for its importance. Should an individual remain in the schools or depart to assume direct responsibility for the cure of souls? First, Henry supposed that the individual was suited both to making further progress in his studies if he remained and to saving souls if he moved on. Someone suited to the cure of souls but not to making progress in study acted foolishly in committing himself to study. On the other hand, someone suited to study but not to the cure of souls should transfer to study so that he might learn how to promote the salvation of souls. For any problem to exist, therefore, it had to be supposed that the individual was sufficiently capable to take either course of action. This being the case, Henry made a distinction between considering the matter with regard to the individual who had to choose and considering it with regard to what might be chosen.

First, he considered the matter with regard to the individual. Either he was equally capable of benefiting himself and the church in either activity, or he was more capable of achieving this benefit in one activity than the other. In the latter case there was no problem. The individual should do what he was best at for the greater benefit of himself and others. But if he was equally suited to both activities, and if equal opportunity to do both presented itself, the question became much more tricky. Then the matter would have to be considered with regard to what might be chosen. From this point of view, either there was an equal need for him to study and to undertake the cure of souls, or there was a greater need for him to perform one of these activities. In the latter case it would obviously be better for him to undertake the task where he was most needed. If, however, there was equality in this respect also, a further distinction had to be made: either it was the case that by lecturing and disputing in the schools he would benefit not only himself, but also others; or this was not the case and he would have to spend a lot of time studying before he could benefit others in

[20] Quodlibet I.35. *Henrici de Gandavo Quodlibet I*, ed. R. Macken (Louvain, 1979), pp. 195–202. See Marmursztejn, 'A normative power in the making', pp. 358–9; Marmursztejn, *L'autorité des maîtres*, pp. 49–54, 142; Wei, 'The self-image of the masters of theology', pp. 413–16.

this way. In the first case, Henry was convinced that the calling of a master of theology was superior because in teaching others to be of use all over the world, in elucidating the truth with regard to the faith and the scriptures, and in defending the truth against the impious and heretics, he could benefit the whole church rather than just one particular church.

Henry emphasized his point by adding another qualification that permitted him to wax lyrical on the fundamental purpose of a master of theology. If a school were sufficiently provided for by other doctors so that he was hardly needed, and a church to which he could transfer himself needed him badly, then it would be better if he left the schools. For the whole point of a master's existence was to serve others and not himself. So when a master found that others taught more effectively than himself, he should move on to where his teaching was actually needed. The work of a master must be taken up because of others, as a necessary task and in response to need. It could only be compared with the office of a prelate. Henry therefore had no doubts about masters who attracted students. It did not matter if they were perhaps not as good as their predecessors. It was much better and more fruitful both for themselves and for others if they taught publicly in the schools so that they could make masters and doctors of others rather than leaving to become merely the instructors of children. The point was that a university theologian could do so much more good than an ordinary clergyman. To illustrate this and to give it emotional impact, Henry took up the image used earlier by Aquinas and compared the master of theology with an architect and the ordinary clergyman with a manual labourer. The work of the master was as far from the work of the ordinary clergyman as the work of an architect was from the work of manual labourers. For the architect taught the principles of building while the labourer applied the rules given to him, rules which he was frequently unable to explain. Similarly the 'rural doctors and preachers' were frequently ignorant of the reasons behind those things which they taught and preached, but they taught them with confidence because they knew that what they taught had been accepted by the university masters. Just as a good architect, vital for the direction of some great building project, would be worthy of reproach if he refused to do the work of an architect but applied himself to stonemasonry, so would the great master, vital in the work of the schools, be worthy of reproach if he devoted himself to hewing the spiritual stones of simple souls when it would be much better if he taught simple men the principles of this task. In what by his own admission was fast becoming a sermon as much as a quaestio, Henry was even able to explain the qualification which he had made

earlier in terms of this image. If an architect found that there were many better architects around and that he was in the way, it would be better for himself and the building under construction if he turned to manual labour. It was just like the master who ought to leave the schools when others could do the job more effectively.

At this point Henry returned to the structure of his quaestio. He had just been discussing the case of a master who by lecturing and disputing in the schools would benefit not only himself but also others. Now, referring back to his earlier distinction, he turned to the case of someone who was not yet able to offer immediate benefit to others in this way, but who needed to spend a long time before he could achieve this. Again Henry made a distinction. Either there were great hopes that such a man could attain the high and lofty status of a leading master, or there were genuine fears that he would never be fit for promotion. In the first case, Henry said that it would be much better if he stayed in the schools to become a great architect and a leading light in the church, rather than leaving at once to remain like a stonemason and a lesser light. But in the second case, Henry thought it would be much better and more useful for himself and the church if he left. When he was sufficiently trained to be able to help others he should go and use well what he had acquired, taking up an office for which he was prepared and suited. This was far better than struggling to attain a status which he might never achieve. Even if he did achieve it, it would only be with great trouble, he would hardly benefit anyone, and people would question his right to the position. So in this case, the proper course of action was not in doubt. However, perhaps noticing some members of his audience looking rather uncomfortable, Henry softened his line slightly with one final qualification. Someone who had studied for a long time and whose promotion was near could await promotion even though there was no question of him becoming a great doctor. As a result of his status he would command greater credibility and greater confidence would be vested in him, and so he could be of greater benefit to himself and to others. But when he had been promoted, he should leave the schools as quickly as was convenient and proper.

It is striking how the crucial issue in Henry's discussion is at every stage the contribution that would be made to society outside the schools. The master only existed to serve others and so it was not always better to remain in the schools. But if he had the ability and there was no greater need for him elsewhere, he should certainly remain. In this way he could make his greatest possible contribution to society. The whole church would benefit if he taught others, if he elucidated the true

faith and the scriptures, and if he defended the truth against heretics. His role was to direct ordinary priests and preachers, and he would be wrong to abandon this task. He was the great architect. His office was necessary to the church like that of the prelate. In this way Henry defined and justified the work of the master entirely in terms of functions that took on meaning outside the schools.

The masters were asked many such questions about their work, and an entirely consistent view emerges from them. They saw themselves as a distinct and self-aware group whose work was vital to the common good. Their contributions to society were numerous: they removed doubt and error, elucidated the truth, defended the faith, and taught others how to preach, teach and see to the cure of souls throughout the church. They were at the top of a hierarchy of knowledge, dealing with problems which others could not begin to comprehend. Lesser men, however, accepted their views as authoritative so that the masters had ever to be mindful of their impact on both their immediate audience and a wider audience beyond the schools. Indeed, great masters benefited the entire church by playing this directing role. Hence their high status as men who merited comparison with bishops and prelates in this world, and who would rank alongside martyrs and virgins in heaven.[21]

The explicit claim to enjoy a status comparable to that of prelates had the potential to cause problems in practice, but this issue was addressed only occasionally. In 1290, however, Godfrey of Fontaines considered what a master should do if he found himself in conflict with a bishop. What should a master do if he were faced with a question and he firmly held one side of the argument to be true but a bishop condemned this view as false so that anyone who asserted or taught it would incur excommunication? Which side of the argument should the master expound?[22] It could be argued that the master should expound the side of the argument which he held to be false because no one should do anything leading to his excommunication. On the other hand, it could be argued that no one ought to lie, especially not a master of theology.

Godfrey began his response by repeating the principle that teaching the truth came into the category of affirmative precepts which oblige for all time, but not at every moment, while not teaching falsehood fell into the category of negative precepts which apply for all time and at every

[21] For their claim to rank with martyrs and virgins, see Marmursztejn, *L'autorité des maîtres*, p. 30; Wei, 'The self-image of the masters of theology', pp. 402–3.

[22] Quodlibet VII.18. *Les quodlibet cinq, six et sept de Godefroid de Fontaines*, ed. M. de Wulf and J. Hoffmans (Louvain, 1914), pp. 402–5. See Marmursztejn, 'A normative power in the making', p. 363; Marmursztejn, *L'autorité des maîtres*, pp. 69–71; Wei, 'The self-image of the masters of theology', 426–8.

moment. So while the master could never teach falsehoods, the truth did not always have to be expounded: that depended on circumstances of time and place. Godfrey then made a basic distinction with regard to the specific case in hand. Either the truth which the master thought he knew concerned matters necessary to salvation or it concerned less important issues such that neither side of the argument ran counter to the true faith or good morals. In the latter case, Godfrey argued that the master should put forward neither side of the argument. Obviously he could not teach the view he held to be false; that was prohibited by a negative precept which applied at all times. On the other hand, teaching the view he held to be true was enjoined by an affirmative precept which applied in the right circumstances of time and place. However, these were not the right circumstances because he was prohibited by a precept from a superior. Since it was not actually wrong to omit the prohibited action, he had to obey. As long as he was in the place where the prelate had jurisdiction and the precept was in force, it was neither the time nor the place to tell this particular truth. Godfrey also stressed the importance of obedience. If the view condemned by the bishop appeared to be certainly true, probably true or even debatable, the condemnation and excommunication might seem misguided because it impeded enquiry and knowledge of the truth. However, the individual should not set himself up in opposition by contradicting the prelate or urging disobedience. For when no crisis required this truth to be taught, if any individual were permitted to oppose the prelate, the chain of obedience would be broken. On the other hand, the prelate should be pressed to revoke the condemnation and excommunication. For although the resulting harm did not concern salvation, it nevertheless worked against the perfect understanding necessary in at least some measure for men to deal freely with truth. However, there was yet another reason why the master could not openly oppose the bishop: scandal had to be avoided just as much as disobedience. Infidels and many of the faithful would be scandalized by the ignorance and simpleness of prelates who deemed something erroneous and contrary to the faith which in fact ran counter to neither faith nor good morals. Even the faithful who did not really understand the issues would hold the faith in less esteem.

So if the issues at stake did not pertain to salvation, the master could not openly challenge the bishop. But what if they did pertain to salvation? If the truth to which the master held was absolutely certain, based on the authority of scripture and true reasoning, the bishop's prohibition was entirely mistaken and did not bind anyone. For a sentence of excommunication containing manifest error was not binding;

the excommunication of anyone teaching that God created heaven and earth was the example cited by Godfrey. So in this case the master must speak his mind, even though he would appear disobedient and some might be scandalized.

But what if the view condemned as false were indeed false and yet the master, using scripture or reason, genuinely believed it to be true and necessary for salvation? He would either have to set aside his conscience or condemn a prohibition and excommunication which were in fact quite proper. Godfrey concluded that the master must say what he believed to be true, for acting against one's conscience, although mistaken, was a greater sin than following it into error. In this case the master sinned more grievously if he failed to expound what his conscience mistakenly judged to be true doctrine because he feared punishment and wished to obey his superior lest he incur excommunication. It was worse to sin directly against God than against a man. Godfrey concluded his analysis by remarking generally that although manifest error on the part of a prelate was not to be supposed lightly, if the faithful doctor found something had been condemned as false which he believed to be true, he ought to try to expose this in a proper way. Godfrey had thus affirmed the master's duty to expound the truth, a duty which might lead him to defy a bishop.

Henry of Ghent faced similar issues in 1291 when he was asked whether it was licit to dispute about the power of prelates.[23] Henry approached the matter in terms of the intention that lay behind the disputation. The intention might be to diminish the power of prelates and obedience to them, to extend their power and obedience to them, or to clarify the nature and extent of their power, thus establishing who should obey them. To dispute about the power of prelates in the first case was entirely illicit. It was to oppose divine order and the public good since prelates derived their power from God for the public utility of the church. Those guilty were eternally damned and since they were often rebellious enemies of the prelates, the prelates usually disliked this kind of disputation and rightly banned them. To dispute about the power of prelates with the intention of extending that power was also illicit. Again it was to work against the order established by God. It was less serious than the first case since it was in a way to favour the church and the prelates. But prelates ought to disapprove of it because

[23] Quodlibet XV.15. *Henrici de Gandavo Quodlibet XV*, ed. G. Etzkorn and G. A. Wilson (Leuven, 2007), pp. 147–54. See Marmursztejn, 'A normative power in the making', pp. 363–4; Marmursztejn, *L'autorité des maîtres*, pp. 69, 71–3; Wei, 'The self-image of the masters of theology', pp. 428–30.

many participants hoped to gain by flattery. Furthermore, good men did not wish to be esteemed above their true worth, often preferring to be esteemed below it. Moreover, those who extended the power of prelates in the hope that it would work to their advantage would diminish that power when they feared that it would work against them.

To dispute about the power of prelates with the intention of establishing its true nature was, however, entirely licit and highly beneficial. Indeed it was necessary and should be welcomed by prelates. From such disputations many prelates often learned how to use their power legitimately and how to avoid abuses. Their subjects on the other hand learned when they must obey their prelates, how to avoid rebellion, and how to resist their prelates when obedience was illicit. Without the disputation both parties might remain in ignorance. Henry made it clear that he did not mean subjects to judge the commands of their superiors when they contained nothing contrary to divine precepts. But when this was feared, the power of the prelates must be scrutinized and assessed by disputation. The good would be distilled by the disputation and obediently implemented. Henry therefore argued that prelates should seek this kind of disputation. They certainly should not avoid it as this would render their precepts suspect. Henry added two final qualifications. He conceded that no doubt would be cast upon a prelate's precepts if he prohibited a disputation when those involved were jealous and suspect. Furthermore, he accepted that it was best not to dispute about prelates' powers when there was no fear of divine precepts being contravened. Nevertheless, Henry was in effect claiming the power to scrutinize the work of the prelates and to regulate it through disputation. Thus on the rare occasions when masters considered how they should relate to prelates and bishops, they showed an unwavering commitment to the fulfilment of their functions. It was a commitment which in a sense gave them authority over bishops and other prelates.

Some quodlibetal questions also point to an abiding tension between theologians and lawyers. During the second half of the twelfth century, canon law became an independent discipline, clearly distinct from theology, and those who studied and practised canon law and Roman law developed a strong sense of their own identity.[24] While, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, Parisian theologians were familiar with developments in canon and Roman law, and did not hesitate to cite legal authorities and draw upon legal analysis, theologians and lawyers held

[24] See M. Bellomo, *The Common Legal Past of Europe 1000–1800* (Washington, DC, 1995); J. A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago, 2008).

conflicting views on how future prelates might best be trained. In 1293, for example, Godfrey of Fontaines was asked whether the church could be governed better by a good lawyer than by a theologian.[25] This gave Godfrey the opportunity to insist that the fundamental purpose of the prelate could only be fulfilled with the help of theology. He began his analysis by offering three possible interpretations of the word 'church'. First, it could mean the physical building in which God was worshipped. Second, it could refer to the faithful who worshipped God and used the building. Third, it could mean the temporal goods, such as dues and possessions, which physically sustained the ministers of the church.

Taking the first definition, Godfrey pointed out that the immediate care of church buildings was best left neither to a theologian nor to a lawyer, but to a good craftsman. Although the prelate was responsible for maintaining the church in this sense, he did not have to acquire manual skills because this was not the real point of his office. Rather he had to have the diligence and prudence to see that when necessary the work was given to men with the appropriate skills. Similarly with the temporal goods of the church, the third definition, the prelate needed only the prudence to put the right men in charge. On the other hand, when the goods of the church had to be defended against attack, the situation at first seemed slightly different. If a secular power used violence against the church, neither theology nor law were much help; the prelate had to do his best to find a remedy. If, however, secular learning were cunningly used against the church, Godfrey acknowledged that a lawyer was more useful than a theologian. The lawyer knew how to defend the goods and liberties of the church against such assailants, and even how to recover them. The lawyer was also more useful in settling legal disputes between the prelate's subjects. However, none of this constituted the real point of the prelate's office and so, as before, the prelate required only the diligence to provide himself with men who could do all this. He needed a good official and a good advocate, but he did not have to be one himself, just as he did not need to be a good craftsman.

Godfrey then turned to the second definition of the church: the faithful. The government of the church in this sense was the real point of the prelate's office. Here the theologian was incomparably more valuable than the lawyer. A man perfect in both fields would be more valuable still, but he would derive more worth from his theology than from his

[25] Quodlibet X.18. *Le dixième quodlibet de Godefroid de Fontaines*, ed. J. Hoffmans (Louvain, 1931), pp. 395–8. See Marmursztejn, 'A normative power in the making', pp. 354–5; Wei, 'The self-image of the masters of theology', pp. 404–5.

law. This was obvious if one considered what pertained to the good of the church in this second sense. What mattered was instruction in the faith through the preaching of the truth and instruction in morals through exhortation. These were matters of theology, not law, as was the administration of the sacraments. Godfrey concluded with some stern criticism of his contemporaries. The prelates of his day did not see the real point of their office in relation to the church in the sense of the faithful, nor even in the lesser sense of church buildings. Rather they seemed to define the church in terms of temporal goods and exercise their office accordingly. The result was great perversity and abuse. Godfrey was thus in no doubt that theological training was more important for prelates than legal training. Law might be useful for the fulfilment of his secondary functions, but the prelate could always find others to perform them for him. When these secondary functions were elevated to primary status, the result was corruption. Theological learning was therefore essential for the good prelate to carry out his true task, the government of the faithful. This implied an important role for the masters of theology whose distinctive responsibility for this kind of training they frequently stressed.

As well as training others, many masters went on to become major prelates themselves. Most significantly, however, they claimed an immediate authority as academic theologians at the University of Paris, an authority that did not always fit with the ordinary jurisdictional structure of the church through which lawyers expected to exercise power. Moreover, they did so with great self-confidence and optimism, readily likening themselves to major prelates and showing little theoretical interest in limitations on their power or concern about friction with other members of the church. They claimed a place at the summit of a hierarchy of learning with an obligation to respond to the needs of the whole Christian community. Moreover, they assumed that their authority would be widely acknowledged and would have an impact. This does much to explain their relentless and detailed scrutiny of all aspects of life.

Generating a need for masters of theology and their judgements in Christian society

One of the most convincing and enduring theses about the role and status of learned men in the middle ages was put forward by R. I. Moore in his work on the persecution of minorities. By establishing a discourse of 'the other' that justified the persecution of several otherwise unrelated groups by the various ecclesiastical and secular bureaucracies in which

they were employed, the 'literati', as Moore termed them, empowered themselves.[26] It is important to grasp, however, that learned men produced a discourse about Christians which they directed at Christians, and it too had the potential to empower the scholarly authors of the discourse because it implied a need for all members of Christendom to know what the Paris theologians had to say on every conceivable issue. Paradoxically, this discourse stressed each individual's responsibility for her or his own salvation, giving grounds for both hope and fear. So much was at stake, however, and sin so hard to avoid, that no ordinary Christian could cope alone. Who then could resist the authoritative guidance that the Paris theologians had to offer?

Purgatory

In the early twelfth century there was much uncertainty about the afterlife, and no consistent view was expressed. By the second half of the thirteenth century, however, Parisian theologians were in broad agreement about what happened to souls when they became separated from their bodies after death: some went to heaven, others went to hell and a third group went to purgatory. The souls in purgatory were punished because, having confessed their sins, they had not completed penance in this life, or because they were guilty of venial sins. Eventually, however, they were purged and went to heaven. The fire that purged them was corporeal fire, and the suffering it caused was greater than that of any penance that might be undertaken in this life.[27] The length of time that they spent in purgatory could be reduced by the living if they held masses, prayed, gave alms, fasted or performed other good works on behalf of the souls in purgatory; these were known as suffrages. There was no direct scriptural authority for the existence of purgatory, although many biblical passages could be granted a supporting role.[28] Without doubt the masters drew upon patristic authorities, notably Augustine and Gregory.[29] Historians have disagreed, however, about how radically ideas about purgatory actually changed, about the

[26] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987).

[27] For a rich account of how thirteenth-century masters explained the suffering of the separated soul, see D. Mowbray, *Pain and Suffering in Medieval Theology: Academic Debates at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 104–30.

[28] J. Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. A. Goldhammer (London, 1984), pp. 41–4.

[29] Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 61–85, 88–95. But for important corrections, see G. R. Roberts, 'Purgatory: "birth" or evolution?', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 634–46.

would not 'befit the divine mercy or justice further to delay glory once God finds the vessel to be suitable'.[134] Bonaventure also confirmed that suffrages benefited souls in purgatory, but not those in hell or heaven. Furthermore, suffrages directed to particular individuals were of greater benefit to those individuals 'if the intention of the petitioner is righteous and God-conformed, and since something the Church has instituted assuredly cannot be without effect'.[135]

Conclusion Reviewing the work of the masters over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is possible to identify a number of developments. Whereas masters in the early twelfth century tended to divide separated souls into four groups immediately after death, it became accepted that there were only three groups corresponding to three possible destinations: heaven, hell and purgatory. From the late twelfth century, while references to purgatorial fire and punishment still abounded, the noun 'purgatorium' entered the vocabulary of the schools and was used as a matter of routine. The extent to which purgatory was given spatial location is less clear, however. Certainly the question of space was treated by the masters with greater frequency, but they did not agree on where it was to be found. It might be near hell or on this earth, and in the latter case it might be where penance was being performed before death intervened or where the living would take notice. Whatever the case, separated souls were not in place in any sense that the living could comprehend. The spatialization of purgatory therefore remained problematic.

Of greater significance for the authority of the masters were a series of binary patterns that underpinned their pastoral strategies by generating a need for their further judgements. Their thinking about purgatory consistently stressed distinctive relationships between the individual and the community, between this life and the next, and between fear and hope. In each case the effect was to construct a notion of the individual Christian who was obliged to accept personal responsibility for his or her behaviour and future fate, but who could and indeed should seek assistance from those who could give expert moral guidance.

As has been noted by several historians, the idea of purgatory meant that everyone was judged individually at the point of death before eventually facing the Last Judgement with everyone else at the end of time.[136] The personal life story of the individual was brought to the

[134] *Ibid.*, 7.2.3–6, pp. 270–2.
[135] *Ibid.*, 7.3.5, p. 276.
[136] Bernstein, 'Heaven, hell and purgatory: 1100–1500', p. 208; Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, pp. 120–1; Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 210–11, 230–4, 292–3.

fore by this immediate reckoning. On the other hand, the individual was not left isolated. As long as the individual repented of his mortal sins and confessed before death, entry to heaven via purgatory was assured, a process that brought the individual into relationship with the church. After death suffrages would help the individual in purgatory, which meant benefiting from membership of community networks of many kinds, most obviously family and friends as well as the church. Practices linked to belief in purgatory thus bound communities together and empowered the church.[137]

Ideas about purgatory also brought the next life into a particular kind of relationship with this life. However alien and incomprehensible the manner in which separated souls might exist in a place, notions of measurement prevalent in this world continued to play out in purgatory. This was most obviously true of time.[138] The experience of purgatory took place in finite time, and the length of time that the soul spent in purgatory was set in the first place by the number and seriousness of sins committed, and by the penance undertaken and the amount completed, and then it might be reduced by suffrages. That which was measurable was open to human understanding and to some extent human control. It was a field in which expert knowledge could make a difference.

In some respects the prospect of going to purgatory offered hope because it enabled those who had not completed penance or who were guilty of venial sins to find a route to heaven. As Hugh of Saint Victor had put it, it was not necessary to be perfect to achieve salvation. But the masters recognized the danger that many might therefore feel free to do as they pleased in this life, intending to repent at the end, thus postponing due punishment until the next life. Fear of hell, which continued to be a major theme in sermons and *exempla*, was not considered enough to prevent this possibility.[139] The masters were therefore consistent in seeking to conjure up fear of purgatory.[140] The pain of punishment in purgatory was always presented as far worse than the worst punishment

[137] Bernstein, 'Heaven, hell and purgatory: 1100–1500', p. 208; Bernstein, 'Theology between heresy and folklore', pp. 42–3; Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 12, 248–9, 254, 320.
[138] See Bernstein, 'Heaven, hell and purgatory: 1100–1500', pp. 209, 211–13; Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 227–30, 233, 290–5.
[139] On the Paris theologians' discussions of hell, and on representations of hell in sermons and *exempla*, see Baschet, *Les justices de l'au-delà*, esp. pp. 33–83; Bernstein, 'Theology between heresy and folklore', pp. 5–44; Bernstein, 'The invocation of hell in thirteenth-century Paris', pp. 13–54; Bernstein, 'Esoteric theology', pp. 509–31.
[140] On hope and fear, see Bernstein, 'Heaven, hell and purgatory: 1100–1500', p. 208; Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 259, 301, 305–6, 310–15, 319, 328, 349, 358.

in this life. William of Auvergne put his finger on the intended effect when he said that fear of purgatory made people more willing to undertake penance in this life and more concerned to finish it. It followed that they would be more ready to listen to those who understood how penance worked.

Essentially, these binary patterns were built around and helped to construct the figure of an individual Christian who expected to face a personal judgement immediately after death, who hoped ultimately to be saved but feared the pain of purgatory, and who understood the prospect in terms of the measurable. It created intense pressure on that individual to accept responsibility for what would happen and thereby generated a need for that individual to know about the crucial factors. Exactly which forms of behaviour were sinful and which were licit? What was a mortal sin and what was venial? In a complex society, when choices were not straightforward, what was the least sinful option? What exactly should be confessed? These were not, however, questions that most people could answer on their own. Fortunately, they were not on their own. In addition to family, friends and the church in general, there were the masters of Paris who were experts in just the kind of knowledge that was required, who could scrutinize any activity and assess its degree of sinfulness, who could advise when standard behaviour seemed to fall foul of religious beliefs, who could work out the best strategy when several rules seemed to create an impossible situation, and who reckoned to disseminate their expertise through educational and ecclesiastical structures. Every individual was subject to these pressures, so the field for the masters' expertise was universal.

Ethic of intention

The pressure on individuals both to take responsibility for their own salvation and to seek help was similarly increased by the masters' work on the moral significance of intention. The key steps were taken by Peter Abelard. He argued that sin lay in consent to anything that was inappropriate because it showed 'scorn for God'.[141] Scorn for God meant 'not to do for his sake what we believe we ought to do for his sake, or not to renounce for his sake what we believe ought to be renounced'.[142] He clarified what he meant by consent by explaining at length what was not a sin. First, sin was not simply a matter of the will, so that it

[141] Peter Abelard, *Ethics*, 1.7, in *Ethical Writings*, trans. P. V. Spade (Indianapolis, 1995), p. 2.
[142] *Ibid.*, 1.8, p. 3.

was not a sin to will a bad act. He demonstrated his point by showing that it was possible to 'sin without any bad will'.[143] This was clear if one imagined an innocent person whose cruel master wished to kill him and who fled, doing everything he could to escape his master. In the end, however, he was found by his master, and 'under duress and against his will, he kills his master in order not to be killed by him'.[144] His will was not bad because he only willed to avoid death, and 'yet he did wrong in consenting (even though he was under duress from the fear of death) to an unjust slaying he should have borne rather than inflicted'.[145] He therefore sinned entirely because he consented to the killing, and not at all because of his will which was not bad. As Abelard put it, 'it is plain that sin is sometimes committed without any bad will at all, so that it is clear from this that willing isn't said to be what sin is'.[146]

Abelard reinforced his point that sin arose from consent and not the will by showing that a bad will did not invariably lead to sin. He imagined his reader insisting that when duress was not involved a bad will was itself sinful.

> Of course, you will say, this [Abelard's previous point] holds where we sin under duress, but it doesn't hold where we sin willingly. For example, if we want to commit some deed we know shouldn't be committed by us. In that case, surely, the bad willing and the sin appear to be the same. For example, someone sees a woman and falls into lust. His mind is stirred by the pleasure of the flesh, with the result that he is set on fire for the shamefulness of sex. So, you say, what else is this willing and shameful desire but sin?[147]

To this Abelard replied:

> What if this willing is curbed by the virtue of moderation but not extinguished, stays for the fight, holds out for the struggle, and doesn't give up even when defeated? For where is the fight if the material for the fight is absent? Where does the great reward come from if there is nothing serious we put up with? When the struggle has passed, there is no fighting left but only the receiving of the reward. We struggle by fighting here in order that, triumphant in the struggle, we might receive a crown elsewhere. But to have a fight it's proper to have an enemy who resists, not one who gives up altogether. Now this enemy is our bad will, the one we triumph over when we subject it to the divine will. But we don't entirely extinguish it, so that we always have a will we might strive against.[148]

Essentially Abelard's argument was that resisting a bad will was a fine achievement that merited reward. There was only sin if the bad will was

[143] *Ibid.*, 1.10, p. 3.
[144] *Ibid.*, 1.11, p. 3.
[145] *Ibid.*, 1.15, p. 4.
[146] *Ibid.*, 1.20, p. 5.
[147] *Ibid.*, 1.21, p. 5.
[148] *Ibid.*, 1.22, pp. 5–6.

not resisted and consent was given. So, in the example that had been raised, 'it isn't the lusting after a woman but the consenting to the lust that is the sin. It isn't the will to have sex with her that is damnable but the will's consent.'[149]

Abelard then moved on to explain that once consent had been given to evil the sin had been committed in full; carrying out the sinful act to which consent had been given did not make the sin any greater.

Now we consent to what isn't allowed when we don't draw back from committing it and are wholly ready to carry it out should the opportunity arise. So whoever is found in this condition has incurred full guilt. Adding on the performance of the deed doesn't add anything to increase the sin. Instead, for God, someone who tries as hard as he can to go through with it is just as guilty as one who does go through with it insofar as he is able.[150]

To show that actions were not part of the sin, he argued that things that ought not to be done could be done without sin.

Now as for things that ought not to be done, I don't think it escapes anyone how often they are done without sin, for example when they are committed through force or ignorance. For instance, if a woman subjected to force has sex with someone else's husband, or if a man somehow deceived sleeps with a woman he thought was his wife, or if by mistake he kills someone he believed should be killed by him in his role as judge. So it isn't a sin to lust after someone else's wife, or to have sex with her; the sin is rather to consent to this lust or to this action.[151]

That sin did not depend on action could also be shown by the fact that the same act could be sinful or sinless, depending on the intention of the person who performed the act.

For God doesn't think about the things that are done but rather in what mind they are done. The merit or praiseworthiness of the doer doesn't consist in the deed but in the intention. Often in fact the same thing is done by different people, through the justice of one and the viciousness of the other. For example, if two people hang a criminal, one out of a zeal for justice and the other out of hatred springing from an old feud, then although the hanging is the same action, and although they certainly do what is good to be done and what justice demands, nevertheless through the difference in their intention the same thing is done by different people, one badly and the other well.[152]

Abelard was evidently aware that his argument might seem subversive since it was normal to punish people for what they actually did.

[149] *Ibid.*, 1.27, p. 6. [150] *Ibid.*, 1.29–30, p. 7.
[151] *Ibid.*, 1.49, pp. 10–11. [152] *Ibid.*, 1.57–8, pp. 12–13.

There are people too who get more than a little upset when they hear us say the doing of a sin isn't properly said to be the sin, or doesn't add anything to enlarge the sin. Why, they ask, is a harder atonement exacted of penitents for performing the deed than for being guilty of the fault?[153]

Abelard was entirely happy with this state of affairs. This was partly because it was impossible for humans to judge intentions; they could only judge what they could see, which meant actions rather than intentions. Only God could apprehend and therefore judge intentions.[154] It was also because of a pragmatic and entirely proper concern for the consequences of actions in terms of social order. Actions that harmed others, damaged the community or caused scandal were rightly punished with severity.

For everything that can contribute to common ruin or to public disadvantage is to be punished with the greater rebuke. What causes greater offense deserves a heavier penalty among us, and the greater scandal for people incurs the greater punishment among people – even if a slighter fault preceded it.[155]

Similarly actions were rewarded or punished in order to shape future behaviour by providing examples for people to follow or reject.

we aren't denying that in this life something is awarded for these good or bad deeds, in order that we may be further encouraged to good deeds or kept from bad ones by present repayment as profit or penalty, and in order that some people should take their examples from others in doing things that are proper or shunning those that are improper.[156]

God, however, judged the individual truly in terms of intention rather than the results of actions.

God pays attention only to the mind in rewarding good or evil, not to the results of the deeds. He doesn't think about what arises from our fault or from our good will, but judges the mind itself in its intention's purpose, not in the result of the outward deed.[157]

Abelard was also careful not to suggest that moral judgement was entirely subjective. Belief that one was acting well and in a manner pleasing to God did not always make an intention good. The intention was only good if one was correct in this assessment.

an intention isn't to be called good because it appears good, but more than that, because it is such as it is considered to be – that is, when if one believes that what he is aiming at is pleasing to God, he is in addition not deceived in his evaluation.[158]

[153] *Ibid.*, 1.77, p. 17. [154] *Ibid.*, 1.82–3, p. 18. [155] *Ibid.*, 1.86, p. 19.
[156] *Ibid.*, 1.100, p. 21. [157] *Ibid.*, 1.90, p. 20. [158] *Ibid.*, 1.109, p. 24.

Nevertheless, whether or not a person committed a sin did indeed depend on what they believed to be right, and they were obliged to follow their conscience. As an example, Abelard cited those who crucified Christ. Sometimes the term 'sin' was used loosely of wrong actions, and in this sense they could be said to have sinned. But in the truer sense of failing to do what one believed to be good and pleasing to God, they could not be said to have sinned.

Thus those who persecuted Christ or his followers, and believed they should be persecuted, we say sinned through action. Nevertheless, they would have sinned more seriously through fault if they had spared them contrary to conscience.[159]

While the church continued to condemn specific acts and to rail against sinful desires, theologians like Abelard turned identifying sin into a complex business which did not simply depend on actions or even desires. Figuring out whether or not an individual had sinned, and how seriously, required careful investigation and sophisticated analysis. In one sense only the individual could look inwards to discover intention, but the masters, and those they had taught, were manifestly equipped to help individuals assess and respond to the fruits of their introspection.

Devil

Against this relentless emphasis on personal responsibility, it might be objected that the devil led people astray and was therefore at least partly to blame. The role of the devil, however, became less and less important in the intellectual view of the world, a trend that can be traced back to Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, or 'Why God Became Man'. According to the traditional account, known as the ransom theory, man had submitted to the devil of his own free will so that the devil gained lawful possession of him. If God simply released man from the devil, he would be failing to respect the devil's lawful rights, thus perpetrating an injustice. But when the devil killed Christ who did not deserve to die, the devil lost his just claims over man. By giving the life of Christ, God paid a ransom that obtained the just release of man. This is Anselm's succinct outline of this argument:

But, to proceed, take that other thing which we are in the habit of saying: that God, in order to set mankind free, was obliged to act against the devil by justice rather than mighty power. We reason that thus the devil, having killed him in whom there was no guilt deserving death and who was God, would justly

[159] *Ibid.*, 1.131, p. 29.

lose the power which he used to have over sinners. Otherwise, so we argue, God would have been doing unjust violence against the devil, since the latter was the lawful possessor of man; for the devil had not gained his hold over man with violence: rather it was man who had gone over to the devil of his own free will.[160]

Anselm rejected this view on a number of grounds. First, both the devil and man belonged to God and were entirely subject to him. God could therefore do whatever he wanted with perfect justice.

given that neither the devil nor man belongs to anyone but God, and that neither stands outside God's power: what action did God need to take with, concerning, or in the case of, someone who was his own, apart from punishing this bond-slave of his who had persuaded his fellow bond-slave to desert his master and come over to join him, and had treacherously taken in the fugitive and, a thief himself, had received a thief along with the stolen property of his master? For they were both thieves, since one was stealing his own person from his master at the instigation of the other. Supposing God were to act in this way, could any action be juster?[161]

Anselm's second objection was that 'although man was being justly tormented when he was tormented by the devil, the devil himself was not acting justly in tormenting him'.[162] On the contrary, the devil was acting out of malice, but God allowed him to do it. Anselm's basic point was that the same action could be just and unjust from different points of view. Suppose someone struck an innocent person, and this person hit back, despite being under an obligation not to avenge himself. It was just that the original assailant should be struck, but not that his victim should do the striking.[163] Third, Anselm examined a passage from Paul's letter to the Colossians that could be taken to support the ransom theory. The passage referred to the 'bond of the decree' which was against us and was annulled by Christ's death. It could be argued that 'the meaning of this is that the devil, prior to the passion of Christ, used to demand sin from mankind justly, as if under the terms of a bond forming part of some agreement, as a sort of interest levied on the first sin which he persuaded man to commit, and that thus he appears to prove his jurisdiction over mankind'. Anselm maintained, however, that the decree came from God not the devil, 'For it was decreed by the just judgment of God and, as it were, confirmed by a bond, in order that man, having sinned of his own free will, would not be able, through

[160] Anselm, *Why God Became Man*, 1.7, in Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works*, ed. B. Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford, 1998), p. 272.
[161] *Ibid.* [162] *Ibid.*
[163] *Ibid.*, pp. 272–3.

7 Anti-intellectual intellectuals in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries: a new context

The identity and authority of Parisian masters of theology in the thirteenth century rested on a number of key ideas and practices. It was possible to know truths with certainty by using reason, and to articulate them clearly in words. This knowledge also depended on living virtuously, and the university's regulations were to ensure that proper behaviour was the norm. Furthermore, the masters were responsible for turning their students into preachers, fulfilling a pastoral function that placed them at the top of a hierarchy of knowledge and justified a status that gave them a measure of independence even from prelates. They also accepted responsibility for the reception of their teaching by a wide audience. In fulfilment of their obligation to save souls by generating and communicating knowledge, they scrutinized sexual and financial behaviour at length and in great detail. While there were always some areas of disagreement, especially with regard to sex, and some of their most important ideas remained implicit, they offered a high degree of consensus. From the late thirteenth century, however, they faced a challenge from women and men operating both inside and outside the university who were intellectually rigorous in attacking the theologians' intellectual practices. Far from straightforwardly anti-intellectual, these anti-intellectual intellectuals produced texts in vernacular languages that circulated outside the university.[1] This chapter will explore Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Romance of the Rose*, Marguerite Porete and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, and some of the vernacular sermons of Eckhart.

[1] J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. T. L. Fagan (Oxford, 1993), p. 135 refers to 'anti-intellectualism' and an 'anti-intellectualist current'. By referring to anti-intellectual *intellectuals*, I distance myself from Le Goff's analysis of key figures as simply 'anti-intellectual', and I mimic the way they played with paradox and contradiction.

Jean de Meun and the *Romance of the Rose*

Jean de Meun wrote his continuation of the *Romance of the Rose* in the 1270s, before 1278, about forty years after Guillaume de Lorris had composed the first part. Very little is known about Jean, but he died in 1305 after also translating a number of works from Latin to French: Vegetius' *On Warfare*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and the letters of Abelard and Heloise. The many surviving manuscripts containing both parts of the *Romance of the Rose* are testimony to their huge popularity.[2]

The first part, composed by Guillaume, opens with a young man, usually referred to as 'the lover', recounting a dream in which it is May five or more years earlier. In the dream the young man walks by a river and sees a walled garden with paintings and inscriptions on the walls. He is admitted to the garden by a beautiful girl, Idleness, from whom he learns that this is the garden of Pleasure. He meets Pleasure, Joy, Courtesy, the God of Love, and Pleasant Looks, and joins their dance. Wandering off alone, followed by the God of Love, he comes to the spring of Narcissus in which there are two crystals reflecting the whole garden. Having seen the reflection of the roses, he goes to find them. When he has chosen one more beautiful than the rest, the God of Love shoots him with five arrows. Captured by Love, he does homage to him and receives his commandments. To help the lover cope with the pain of being a lover, Love gives him Hope, Pleasant Thought, Pleasant Conversation and Pleasant Looks. The lover is then left alone, knowing that only the rose-bud can cure his wounds. The roses are enclosed by a hedge through which he passes after meeting Fair Welcome. The roses are guarded, however, by Rebuff, Evil Tongue, Shame and Fear, and the lover flees beyond the hedge. Reason then descends from her tower and advises him to forget his love. This has no effect, and the lover turns to Friend who tells him to plead with Rebuff. He does so and is allowed to love the rose as long as he does not cross the hedge. Generosity of Spirit and Pity then secure him admission to the enclosure, and Venus persuades Fair Welcome to allow him to kiss the rose. Jealousy's response is to enclose the roses within a new wall, and to build a tower in the middle within which he imprisons Fair Welcome, guarded by an old woman. This is the point at which the work of Guillaume de Lorris ends.

[2] C. W. Dunn, 'Introduction', *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. H. W. Robbins (New York, 1962), pp. xiii, xvi–xviii, xxv; S. Kay, *The Romance of the Rose* (London, 1995), pp. 9–10.

At the beginning of Jean's continuation, Reason reappears and lectures the lover on love, advising him to abandon it and to let her be his beloved. The lover refuses, affirming his love for the rose. Friend then appears, recommending strategies that he should adopt as a lover, including concealing his feelings, giving gifts, making empty promises and using force when the opportunity arises. He further advises against marriage, and explains that keeping a woman means letting her be free. The lover decides that he prefers Friend to Reason. Walking away from the castle, he meets Wealth guarding the road to Lavish Giving. The lover wishes to take this road, but Wealth will not permit it, explaining that it leads to poverty, and that he is not rich enough. While the lover endeavours to live according to Friend's advice, Love appears, berates him for wavering, and makes him repeat his commandments. Love then summons his barons to lay siege to the castle and free Fair Welcome. The barons include Constrained Abstinence and False Seeming, and Love asks False Seeming to say where he can be found and how he can be recognized. False Seeming then speaks, explaining that he has many dwellings, but presenting himself chiefly as a mendicant friar. An assault on the castle follows, with False Seeming and Constrained Abstinence killing Evil Tongue. The Old Woman, informed that Evil Tongue is dead, persuades Fair Welcome to accept a chaplet of flowers from the lover. She then offers Fair Welcome the benefit of her experience in love. Her advice includes not to be generous, to have more than one lover, to sell love dearly to the highest bidder, and that a woman should not delay too long before taking her pleasure. The Old Woman lets the lover into the castle, and he is about to take the rose when he is sent packing by Rebuff, Fear and Shame, who lock Fair Welcome in the tower. They attack the lover, who has to be rescued by the barons, and battle ensues. Love's host is losing, so he sends for Venus, his mother, and arranges a truce. Venus joins the army and they all swear to defeat Chastity. Meanwhile, Nature is forging individual creatures to continue the species, but weeps. She confesses to Genius, her priest: God put her in charge of the world that he created, and all things obey her rules, as God desired, except man. God may punish most sins, but Nature shares Love's complaint against those who do not use the 'tools' they have been given by Nature to procreate. Nature sends Genius to the host to excommunicate her opponents and absolve those who work to increase their families. Genius absolves Nature and flies to the host. Love dresses Genius as a bishop, and Genius reads Nature's sentence, condemning those who have neglected to use what she has given them to perpetuate the human race. In his sermon, Genius urges the barons

to love and to preach the same message to others, assuring them that they will get to heaven if they do. Using religious imagery, he describes heaven as a park as superior to the garden in which the lover saw pleasure as truth is to fiction. The final assault is led by Venus, who fires a burning arrow through a loophole set between two small pillars in the tower. The whole castle is set alight, causing Rebuff, Fear and Shame to flee. Fair Welcome says that the lover may pluck the rose. The lover, now a pilgrim, penetrates the aperture between the two pillars with his staff and plucks the rose. The lover awakes.

While Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Romance of the Rose* is frequently and rightly analysed in relation to literary genres and other literary texts, it is also clearly a product of the university milieu. More specifically, it seems to offer the perspective of a secular clerk educated in the faculty of arts.[3] Frequent use is made of terms derived from the study of logic, for example. Almost as soon as Jean takes up the story, the lover, on the brink of despair, expresses his frustration with the comfort provided by Hope: 'it is foolish to approach too close to her, for when she constructs a good syllogism, we should be very much afraid that she will draw the negative conclusion'.[4] Reason tells the lover that he is 'not a good logician', and later says that the lover will take his point about Fortune's wheel 'if you know anything of logic, which is a genuine science'.[5] Perhaps Reason might be expected to value logic, but logical jargon is deployed by other figures. False Seeming claims that false religious

> offer to the world a syllogism that has a shameful conclusion: a man wears a religious habit, therefore he is religious. This argument is entirely specious, not worth a privet-knife: the habit does not make the monk. And yet no one can answer it, no matter how high he tonsures his head or shaves it with the razor of Elenchis, which divides fraud into thirteen branches; no one is so good at making distinctions that he dare utter a single word about it.[6]

All scholars would be familiar with logical terminology, but it is noticeable that members of all the faculties except the faculty of arts are

[3] Others to see Jean de Meun as a product of the faculty of arts at Paris include: N. Cohn, *The World-View of a Thirteenth-Century Parisian Intellectual: Jean de Meun and the Roman de la Rose* (Durham, 1961), pp. 7–9; A. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), p. 350. For placement in the context of the university more generally, see Dunn, 'Introduction', pp. xvii–xviii; G. Paré, *Les idées et les letttres aux XIIIe siècle. Le 'Roman de la Rose'* (Montreal, 1947), pp. 8–10, 346.

[4] *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. F. Horgan (Oxford, 1994), p. 62.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 101.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70. For other examples, see pp. 181, 187, 197, 317, 331. For extended analysis of Jean's scholarly vocabulary, see Paré, *Les idées et les lettres aux XIIIe siècle*, pp. 15–80.

criticized. Reason likens lawyers, physicians and theologians to merchants because they are always tormented by desire for greater wealth:

Lawyers and physicians are all bound with these bonds, all hanged with this rope, if they sell their knowledge for money. They find gain so sweet and desirable and are so fired with covetousness and trickery that the one would like to have sixty patients for every one he has, and the other thirty cases, or indeed two hundred or two thousand. The same is true of theologians who walk the earth: when they preach in order to acquire honours or favours or wealth, the same anguish tears their hearts.[7]

The theologians in particular receive several digs. Dressed so that Love thinks him 'a holy hermit', False Seeming eats and drinks well 'as a theologian should'.[8] Turning himself into a friar, he compares himself favourably with the secular clergy: 'prelates are not nearly so wise nor so well instructed as me. I have a degree in theology; indeed, by God, I have taught it for a long time. The best men we know have chosen me as their confessor on account of my intelligence and learning.'[9] This was a distorted echo of the claims that we have seen masters of theology making about themselves in their quodlibetal disputations. When Genius wonders how God could either want everyone to be chaste, so that the human race died out, or wish only some to be chaste, so that there was inequality amongst those he loved equally, he concluded: 'Let theologians come and theologize about it: they will never reach a conclusion.'[10]

Several of these attacks on theologians were more specifically aimed at the friars; 'theologians who walk the earth' were presumably friars, for example. Hostility to the friars is expressed at length by False Seeming, who refers explicitly to the controversies that rocked the University of Paris during the thirteenth century. He began by presenting a standard case against begging as a form of voluntary poverty, indicating that this view had prevailed amongst Paris theologians before the friars entered the university:

I can swear forthwith that it is not written in any law, or at least not in ours, that when Jesus Christ and his apostles were on this earth they were ever seeking for bread, for they did not beg (this is what the masters of divinity were formerly accustomed to preach in the city of Paris). They could have demanded, in the fullness of their power, without needing to beg, for they were shepherds in God's name and had the cure of souls. And immediately after their master's death, they even began again to work with their hands, supporting themselves by their work.[11]

[7] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 78.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 172. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 190.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 302. [11] *Ibid.*, pp. 173–4.

Emphasizing the importance of work and the very particular circumstances in which begging was permitted, False Seeming recalls the heroic resistance mounted by William of Saint Amour, the master of arts and then theology who 'used to debate and teach and preach on this subject with the Paris theologians', only to be exiled.[12] He also describes how members of the University of Paris responded when the Franciscan Gerard of Borgo San Donnino produced his *Liber introductorius in evangelium aeternum*, or 'Introduction to the Eternal Gospel', which claimed that the writings of Joachim of Fiore were to supersede the Old and New Testaments:

Had it not been for the vigilance of the University, which keeps the keys of Christendom, everything would have been thrown into turmoil when, with evil intent, in the year of our Lord 1255 (and no man living will contradict me) there was released as a model for imitation, and this is true, a book written by the devil, the Eternal Gospel ... The University, which was asleep at the time, raised its head; it awoke at the uproar which the book provoked and scarcely slept afterward but, when it saw the horrible monster, took up arms against it, fully prepared to do battle with it and to hand over the book to the judges.[13]

Gerard's work actually appeared in 1254, and opposition to it was led by William of Saint Amour whose *De periculis novissimorum temporum*, or 'On the Dangers of Most Recent Times', was an attack on the friars in general.[14] These were very much the views of the secular clergy, and especially the secular masters in Paris.

More generally and less dramatically, Jean's continuation also conveys the way in which university men viewed the laity. The idea that learning generated in the university should be widely disseminated is expressed by Genius when he invites Love's army to memorize his sermon:

In this way, wherever you go, to fortress or castle, city or town, in winter or summer, you may recite it to those who were not here. It is good to remember the words that come from a good school, and better to repeat them.[15]

On the other hand, the problems of explaining complex matters to the laity are also mentioned on more than one occasion. Nature notes that 'it is difficult to provide lay people with a solution to the question of

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 174–7; quotation at p. 177.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 182.
[14] William of Saint Amour, *De periculis novissimorum temporum*, ed. and trans. G. Geltner (Paris, 2008). For the errors identified by the masters of theology, see *Chartularium*, no. 243, pp. 272–6. On this episode, see M.-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne, 1250–1259* (Paris, 1972); G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent c. 1250–c. 1450*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), vol. 1, 69–83; Paré, *Les idées et les lettres aux XIIIe siècle*, pp. 180–3.
[15] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 307.

how predestination and the divine prescience, which knows all things in advance, can coexist with free will'.[16] And Nature will not even attempt to explain the way mirrors work: 'The subject would be too long; it would be hard to explain and very difficult to understand, even if anyone were capable of teaching it, particularly to lay folk, without confining himself to generalities.'[17] And yet the *Romance of the Rose* was written in the vernacular and was therefore at least in part for a lay audience.

Hostility to merchants also emerges at several points. Reason, for example, pities them because they are tortured by their insatiable greed:

> no merchant lives in comfort, for such a war rages in his heart that he burns alive to acquire more goods and will never have enough. He is afraid of losing what he has acquired and chases after what remains to be gained but which he will never possess, for his greatest desire is to acquire the property of others. He has undertaken an extraordinarily difficult task, for he aspires to drink the whole of the Seine but will never be able to do it, because there will always be some left. This is the burning anguish, the everlasting torment, the agonising conflict that tears at his vitals and tortures him with his lack; it is that the more he gains, the more he lacks.[18]

As we have seen, this was very much the lesson that was learned from Aristotle. Usury too meets with Reason's disapproval on familiar grounds: 'Wealth is seriously injured by being robbed of its true nature, which is to help men and go to their aid and not to be loaned at interest.'[19] False Seeming reckons that most who prospered in towns were despoiling the poor:

> But see what quantities of pennies lie in the storehouses of usurers, forgers, money-lenders, bailiffs, beadles, provosts, mayors: all of them practically live by rapine ... they all assail the poor and there is none who will not fleece them and clothe himself with the spoils.[20]

This was only part of the learned response to towns and the money economy, but it was articulated in terms that we have seen the theologians also using.

While Reason criticized the townspeople, Nature turned on princes and the nobility:

> But now it has come to this, that there are good men who work at philosophy all their lives, and journey to foreign lands in order to obtain wisdom and worth,

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 264. See also pp. 268, 273.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 281–2. [18] *Ibid.*, pp. 77–8.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 79. [20] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

> who endure great poverty as beggars or debtors and who perhaps go barefoot and naked, and who are neither loved nor held in affection. Princes do not care a fig for them, and yet – God preserve me from fevers – they are nobler men than those who hunt hares and those who are accustomed to remain on the family middens.[21]

The complaint that scholars were undervalued was of long standing, and we shall return to the theme of nobility.

In addition to these various contextual references, Jean's continuation was in many respects a summa or encyclopedia of university learning. Especially in Nature's confession to Genius, it contains a considerable body of scientific material, drawing both on the poetic neoplatonism of the twelfth century, above all Alan of Lille, and on Aristotelian science studied in the faculty of arts in the thirteenth century. Theological matters were also included, for example the debate about free will that has already been mentioned, and here Boethius was Jean's chief source.[22] Most criticism of the *Romance of the Rose* stresses the ways in which Jean engages with literary genres and conventions, and in particular his commentary, implicit and explicit, on the first part written by Guillaume de Lorris. To those who study the University of Paris, however, almost every line of Jean's continuation seems to invoke debates that gripped the university or to make reference to some aspect of its basic culture. While it is impossible to be certain that Jean studied in the faculty of arts at the University of Paris, he was certainly familiar with material that was taught there, and gave ready expression to the cultural values of its members, while positioning himself on its margins simply by writing in the vernacular.

Whatever Jean's own relationship with the university, his continuation of the *Romance of the Rose* represented a profound challenge to conceptions of knowledge and authority that were articulated by university scholars, especially the masters of theology. He never presented a clear authorial voice in which an authoritative claim to speak the truth could be made. He produced a text that resists and undermines any interpretation that culminates in a claim to have identified definite meaning. Indeed, his one consistent message seems to be that meaning can never be certain and so knowledge of the truth is unobtainable.[23]

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 289.
[22] Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, pp. 96–100; G. Paré, *Le 'Roman de la Rose' et la scolastique courtoise* (Paris, 1941), pp. 52–86, 88–111, 183–203 ; Paré, *Les idées et les letttres aux XIIIe siècle*, pp. 203–78 ; L. Polak, 'Plato, Nature and Jean de Meun', *Reading Medieval Studies* 3 (1977): 80–103.
[23] For similar conclusions, see Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, passim; J. O. Ward, 'Rhetoric in the faculty of arts at the universities of Paris and Oxford in the middle ages: a

Uncertainty about meaning is generated repeatedly at many levels. From the outset, the lover recounts a dream. Guillaume de Lorris began the *Romance of the Rose* with the claim that dreams can contain truth:

> Some say that there is nothing in dreams but lies and fables; however, one may have dreams which are not in the least deceitful, but which later become clear ... Whoever thinks or says that it is foolish or stupid to believe that a dream may come true, let him think me mad if he likes; for my part I am confident that a dream may signify the good or ill that may befall people, for many people dream many things secretly, at night, which are later seen openly.[24]

Jean de Meun, however, had Nature reject this view, even when dreams were linked with religious fervour:

> Or there are those in whom devout and profound contemplation causes the objects of their meditations to appear in their thoughts, and who truly believe that they see them clearly and objectively. But these are merely lies and deceits, just as in the case of the man who dreams and believes that the spiritual substances he sees are really present.[25]

Nature goes on to list the many things about which people might dream, including the very scenario presented by Guillaume de Lorris: a lover might dream about Jealousy catching him in the act with his sweetheart, because of Evil Tongue. Whatever people dream, however, Nature insists that they are misled:

> Yet they for their part truly believe that these things exist outside themselves, and make of them all an occasion for grief or joy; in fact they carry them all inside their own heads, which, by thus admitting phantoms, deceive the five senses.[26]

Since the *Romance of the Rose* is an account of a dream, Nature seems to indicate that it is deceptive by its very nature.

Jean de Meun thus implanted an idea in the mind of the reader of his text, but it is not possible to say that Jean himself held this to be true because the idea is voiced through Nature. This brings us to another source of uncertainty about meaning. Much of the continuation consists of speeches delivered by allegorical figures who express different points of view. Jean offers no grounds for thinking that one figure speaks with greater authority than another, so a raft of ideas and arguments remain in play, the tensions between them unresolved.[27] To

summary of the evidence', *Bulletin Du Cange (Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi)* 54 (1996): 159–231 at 230–1 (citing a thesis by R. Borny).

[24] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 3.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 283. [26] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

[27] See Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, p. 47.

add to the uncertainty, individual figures subvert their own assertions repeatedly. Nature, for example, having insisted that dreams deceive, claims to be unwilling to consider the nature of dreams or to pronounce upon their veracity: 'Now for my part I do not wish to discuss the truth or falsehood of dreams, nor whether they should all be accepted or all rejected.'[28] The reader might well think that the matter had already been discussed and that Nature had already taken an explicit stance, but apparently not. The idea that dreams deceive has been brought into play, but not even the allegorical figure who expressed it will stick by it. Old Woman, reflecting on the experience of her youth, offers a conventionally negative stereotype of women: they desire many lovers and seek to profit from them. But she goes on to explain that women have to behave like this because men are just the same: 'they are all deceitful traitors, ready to indulge their lusts with everyone, and we should deceive them in our turn'.[29] Examples of women who have suffered at the hands of faithless men are duly provided, and the conventional condemnation of women has been turned against men.[30] Similarly Genius first denounces women for being unable to keep a secret, then illustrates his point with a story in which it is the husband who cannot keep his mouth shut. Once again the gender stereotype is subverted almost as soon as it has been produced.[31] Most strikingly, however, the words of False Seeming generate doubt and uncertainty at every turn. A confessed liar and deceiver, he simultaneously claims to be telling the truth and insists that he will always be true to his duplicitous nature. He assures Love that he is not lying to him, although he would do so if he thought he could get away with it:

> I dare not lie to you, but if I could have felt that you would not have noticed it, I would have served you with a lie: I would certainly have tricked you and would not have refrained, even though it was a sin.[32]

When Love queries his expressions of loyalty, pointing out that loyalty is against his nature, False Seeming does not disagree, inviting him to 'take the risk' because nothing could give him the certainty that he would like:

> Take the risk, for if you require sureties, you will not be any more secure as a result, no indeed, not if I gave you hostages or letters, witnesses or pledges ... Do you imagine that I have abandoned trickery and duplicity just because I am

[28] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 285. [29] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 203–4. See Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, pp. 103–4.

[31] *Romance of the Rose*, pp. 252–6. See Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, pp. 104–5.

[32] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 184.

wearing these simple clothes, under whose cover I have performed many great evils? By God, my heart will never change.[33]

Meaning is at its most unstable when the words are spoken by False Seeming.

To further undermine the reader's confidence in the possibility of certain meaning, false signs are repeatedly identified. Nature explains how mirrors alter perception, producing images that magnify, reduce or distort actual objects, so that 'when the observers are thus deceived, having seen such things through the images revealed to them in mirrors or by distance, they go straight to the people, with the false, lying boast that they have seen devils, such are the optical illusions that they experience'.[34] The marks of nobility are, according to Nature, equally misleading. Many look the part, 'they have dogs and birds and therefore look like young noblemen, and they go hunting along rivers and through woods, fields, and heathlands, and indulge in leisurely diversions', but this is just part of the lie by which they 'steal the name of nobility, since they do not resemble their good ancestors'.[35] The world is apparently full of misleading signs. Moreover, if advice dispensed in the course of Jean's continuation were actually followed, it would also be full of people perpetrating deliberate acts of deception. Friend advises men to conceal their true feelings, pretend to offer everything, deceive, make false promises, weep fake tears, lie about their intentions, and mimic their lovers' moods and behaviour.[36] Old Woman would have women cover their true appearance, cry skilfully, hide their thoughts, feign fear and, if necessary, fake their orgasms.[37] The reader of Jean's continuation is invited to suspect deception at every turn.

Even the citation of authorities, the usual guarantee of truthful meaning, fails to generate secure meaning in Jean's continuation. After reporting the harangues of Reason, Friend, False Seeming and Old Woman, the lover expresses concern that he may have caused offence. Women in particular may have found 'words that seem ... to be a harsh and savage attack on feminine behaviour'.[38] In his defence, he says that he wrote so that the truth about women would be known, but then he hides behind his authorities:

Moreover, honourable ladies, if it seems to you that I am making things up, do not call me a liar, but blame those authors who have written in their books what I have said, and those in whose company I will speak. I shall tell no lie, unless

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 281. Mirrors are discussed at pp. 278–81.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 291. [36] *Ibid.*, pp. 112–19.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 205–22. [38] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

the worthy men who wrote the ancient books also lied ... I merely repeat, except for making a few additions on my own account which cost you little.[39]

The lover thus inserts distance between himself and his authorities, refusing to accept responsibility for his words. When he expresses fear that he may be punished by those who feel themselves attacked by the words of False Seeming, he brings the authority of the church into play: 'And if I have said anything that Holy Church judges foolish, I am ready to make any amends she may wish, provided I am capable of doing so.'[40] This was the standard statement of willingness to submit to higher ecclesiastical authority that theologians customarily made, and which generally ensured that they could not be condemned for heresy. Here it serves merely to reinforce the lover's refusal to accept any possible blame.

If the lover who narrates the dream will not take responsibility for the meaning of his words, what about Jean de Meun? Almost the entire continuation is voiced at least through the lover, and generally through other figures as well, denying the apparent security of a strong authorial voice. There are, however, moments of knowing self-reference when the reader is made aware of an author who is not the lover and who has an existence outside the text. Reason refers to the temporary nature of existence in this life, 'as you can learn from the clerks who explain Boethius' *Consolation* and the thoughts contained in it', and she goes on to remark: 'If someone were to translate this book for the laity, he would do them a great service.'[41] Jean de Meun went on to perform just this service, writing a French translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. Friend is so pleased with his advice that he wishes for a wider audience: 'I should like what I want to say to you to become well known: it ought to be in a book for people to read.'[42] Jean has obviously written precisely this book. Most strikingly, Love identifies Guillaume de Lorris as the author of the first part of the *Romance of the Rose*, explaining exactly where he will stop and how the text will be continued by the yet unborn Jean:

Then will come Jean Chopinel, gay in heart and alert in body, who will be born in Meung-sur-Loire and will serve me, feasting and fasting, his whole life long, without avarice or envy ... This romance will be so dear to him that he will want to complete it, if he has sufficient time and opportunity, for where Guillaume stops, Jean will continue, more than forty years after his death, and that is no lie.[43]

[39] *Ibid.* [40] *Ibid.*, p. 236. [41] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 148. [43] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

Evidently Jean wanted credit for a work which Genius later praises when urging Love and his barons to avoid the vices previously listed by Nature, but which he feels no need to recount: 'The delightful Romance of the Rose gives you a brief account of them: look them up there if you like, the better to avoid them.'[44] Jean is not therefore entirely absent from the text, and his existence outside the text is invoked or implied, but the moments of self-reference simply add another voice to the mix rather than generating a claim to authority that might have pinned down specific meaning. Throughout the continuation different and sometimes contradictory meanings are held in play. Ways of knowing are not placed within a hierarchy in order to reconcile these meanings or privilege some in relation to others.[45] Meaning is therefore left uncertain and disordered.

While meaning is never certain in Jean's continuation, the cacophony of possible meanings is not neutral. On the contrary, it is critically directed, and one of its chief targets was a major weak spot in theological discourse: sexual pleasure. Reason comes closest to expressing the thinking of at least some theologians. She defines the kind of love experienced by the lover as the pursuit of pleasure alone, without concern for procreation:

Love, if my judgement is correct, is a mental illness afflicting two persons of opposite sex in close proximity who are both free agents. It comes upon people through a burning desire, born of disordered perception, to embrace and to kiss and to seek carnal gratification. A lover is concerned with nothing else but is filled with this ardent delight. He attaches no importance to procreation, but strives only for pleasure.[46]

Reason maintains, however, that sex should always be performed with the intention to have children:

But I know well, and this is no conjecture, that anyone who lies with a woman should wish to the best of his ability to perpetuate his divine essence and to preserve himself in a creature like himself (for all men are subject to decay), so that the succession of generations should not fail.[47]

Moreover, sexual pleasure existed to ensure that procreation occurred:

Therefore Nature made the work pleasurable, desiring that it should be so delightful that the workmen should not take to their heels or hate it, for there

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 306.
[45] For the perceptive suggestion that hierarchies of knowledge are run against each other in Jean's continuation, see Kay, *Romance of the Rose*, p. 96.
[46] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 67.
[47] *Ibid.*

are many who would never perform this task unless they were attracted by pleasure.[48]

To seek pleasure for its own sake, however, was wrong:

You should know that no one can love as he ought or with the right intentions if he desires only delight.[49]

According to Reason, this was exactly the lover's problem:

But the love that has ensnared you offers you carnal delight, so that you have no interest in anything else. That is why you want to have the rose, and dream of no other possession.[50]

The kind of love that led to procreation, on the other hand, was experienced by animals as well as men, and it was morally neutral:

There is another, natural, kind of love, which Nature created in the animals and that enables them to produce their young, and to suckle and rear them. If you wish me to define for you the love of which I speak, it is a natural and properly motivated inclination to wish to preserve one's fellow creatures, either by engendering them or by seeing to their rearing. Men and beasts are equally well fitted for this love, which, however profitable it may be, carries with it no praise or blame or merit, and those who love thus deserve neither blame nor praise.[51]

As we have seen, all theologians condemned the pursuit of sexual pleasure for its own sake, and there were certainly many who saw little or no fault in sexual pleasure experienced when the motive for intercourse was procreation. This, however, was always provided that the sex was between husband and wife, whereas Reason simply did not mention marriage. Ideas familiar to and supported by many theologians were thus articulated with a fundamental element missing.

During Friend's great speech, however, the theme of marriage was very much to the fore. He said of husband and wife that 'she ought not to be his lady but his equal and companion, as the law joins them together, and he for his part should be her companion, without making himself her lord and master'.[52] As we have seen, the theme of equality occurred when theologians discussed marital affection. It was, moreover, in the theory of the conjugal debt that each spouse had an equal claim to receive sexual gratification from the other. But Friend's point was rather that lordship was incompatible with love:

no man who wants to be called lord will be loved by his wife, for love must die when lovers assume authority. Love cannot last or survive except in hearts that are free and at liberty.[53]

[48] *Ibid.* [49] *Ibid.* [50] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 88–9. [52] *Ibid.*, p. 144. [53] *Ibid.*

His advice was that marriage was perhaps to be avoided, and that male lovers, whether married or not, should tolerate the indiscretions of their women if they wished to keep them. A brief echo of theological discourse was thus included within a set of ideas utterly inimical to the teaching of all theologians.

Old Woman offered a view of the purpose of marriage that chimed with the theologians' in so far as she thought that women were married to prevent inappropriate behaviour and to ensure that children were brought up properly, but she immediately indicated that women were sure to fight to be free of marital constraints:

> when, in order to prevent dissolute conduct, quarrelling, and killing, and to facilitate the rearing of children, which is their joint responsibility, these ladies and maidens are affianced, taken, and married by law, they still try in every way they can, and whether they be ugly or fair, to regain their freedom.[54]

Whereas some theologians looked to animal behaviour to show that it was natural for couples to stay together to rear their young, Old Woman noted that a caged bird would always struggle to escape back to the woods, and in exactly the same way 'all women, whether maidens or ladies and whatever their origin, are naturally disposed to search willingly for ways and paths by which they might achieve freedom, for they would always like to have it'.[55] Moreover, the freedom they naturally desired was to pursue sexual pleasure:

> Every creature wants to return to its nature, and will not fail to do so, however violent the pressure of force or convention. This should excuse Venus for wishing to make use of her freedom, and all those ladies who take their pleasure although they are bound in marriage, for it is Nature, drawing them towards their freedom, who makes them do this.[56]

Since their appetites are natural, Old Woman contends that they are not to be blamed for giving them full expression. Indeed, lovers had a responsibility to afford each other mutual pleasure, and the woman should pretend to experience pleasure if necessary:

> And when they go to work, they should both exert themselves so conscientiously and to such good effect that both together experience pleasure before the work is finished; they should wait for each other so that they may come to a climax together ... If she feels no pleasure, she should pretend to enjoy the experience and simulate all the signs that she knows are appropriate to pleasure.[57]

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 214. [55] *Ibid.*, p. 215.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 216. [57] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

Once again an idea that theologians would have acknowledged was a small element within a line of reasoning alien to them.

The importance of procreation is emphasized again by Nature and Genius, and Genius assumes the outward trappings of religion to make the point. Dressed by Love as a bishop, he pronounces sentence on behalf of Nature, condemning those who refuse to have sex, and promising pardon and a place in heaven for those who work to procreate:

> by the authority of Nature, let all those disloyal renegades, great or humble, who scorn those works by which Nature is maintained, be excommunicated and ruthlessly condemned. But if a man strives with all his might to preserve Nature, keeps himself from base thoughts and toils and struggles faithfully to be a true lover, let him go to paradise crowned with flowers. Provided he make a good confession, I will take the whole burden of it upon myself with all the power at my disposal, and he will take away with him no less a pardon than that.[58]

Sexual pleasure is also to be one of the rewards: 'Concentrate on leading a good life; let every man embrace his sweetheart and every lady her lover with kissing, feasting, and pleasure.'[59] Religious imagery is developed as Genius describes heaven as 'the fair and verdant park where the Virgin's son, the white-fleeced lamb, brings the sheep with him, leaping ahead over the grass'.[60] The Trinity is invoked in the healing spring which flows through three channels and contains a three-faceted carbuncle, and the cross is represented by the olive tree standing by the spring.[61] Once again, however, the element of marriage was missing. Moreover, even those theologians who saw no sin in marital sex for procreation did not suggest that married couples won themselves places in heaven by coupling for this reason. The idea that those who were virgins or chaste were thereby excluded from heaven was simply absurd in theological terms. As Jean's continuation reaches its end with the lover plucking the rose, even procreative purpose fades away, and pleasure predominates, although after the lover has scattered his seed, the rosebud 'swelled and expanded'.[62] While meaning is consistently uncertain, Jean's continuation undermines conventional theological thinking about sex and marriage by taking fragments of theological discourse and misplacing them in conjunction with utterly alien notions, forcing them into sequences of thought leading to conclusions that theologians rejected entirely. Elements of their thinking are brought into play in order to be played with. At the heart of almost every move is the refusal to condemn, and frequently the exaltation of, sexual pleasure, the very

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 301. [59] *Ibid.*, p. 306. [60] *Ibid.*, p. 307.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 315–16. [62] *Ibid.*, p. 334.

aspect of sexual life on which theologians had most trouble reaching a clear consensus. The very uncertainty of meaning made it possible to challenge the authoritative teaching of theologians in a way that was all the more effective because the challenger could not be clearly identified and refuted.

Jean de Meun had a profound grasp of university learning, but he directed it against the intellectual processes that produced authoritative knowledge in the university. Just as disordered meaning could be used to exploit theological confusion about sexual pleasure, it could be deployed to disparage Reason cumulatively. The naming of sexual organs is a key example. The lover objects to Reason using the word 'testicles': 'I do not think it was courteous of you to pronounce the word "testicles": no well-bred girl should call them by their name.'[63] Reason replies that it cannot be a sin to refer 'in plain and unglossed language' to things God created to perpetuate the human race, prompting the lover to declare that his objection is not to the things but to the vile words that God did not create.[64] This leads Reason to explain that God wanted her to find names 'in order to increase our understanding' and that the words themselves are fine. She suggests that had she 'called testicles relics and relics testicles, then you who thus attack and reproach me would tell me instead that relics was an ugly, base word'.[65] According to Reason, it was only social custom that led women in France to use the names of other things metaphorically: 'purses, harness, things, torches, pricks'.[66] In the rest of Jean's continuation, it is just this custom that prevails, especially as the plucking of the rose becomes imminent. Referring to sexual intercourse, Genius has styluses writing on tablets, hammers beating on the anvil, and the plough ploughing the fertile field.[67] In the end the lover in the guise of a pilgrim thrusts his staff into the aperture between two pillars:

> I knelt without delay, full of agility and vigour, between the two fair pillars ... I wanted to sheathe my staff by putting it into the aperture while the scrip hung outside. I tried to thrust it in at one go, but it came out and I tried again, to no avail because it sprang out every time and nothing I did could make it go in. There was a barrier within, which I could feel but could not see ... when I could not immediately break the barrier, I struggled so hard and with such violence that I was drenched in sweat ... Nothing, however, could have prevented me from sliding my staff all the way in. I did so without delay, but the scrip with its pounding hammers stayed dangling outside.[68]

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 106. [64] *Ibid.* [65] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 109. [67] *Ibid.*, pp. 302–3.
[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 332–3.

By not using proper names and developing images in graphic detail, sexual acts are more explicitly portrayed, and Reason's strategy is ignored. More than this, Reason is repeatedly rejected by the other figures. Love does so on Jean's behalf when foretelling the writing of the continuation: 'He [Jean] will be so wise that he will care nothing for Reason.'[69] Just before the rose is finally taken, 'Fear fled, and Shame sprang after her, leaving behind the blazing castle; never again would she set any store by the lessons of Reason.'[70] At the very end, the lover acknowledges his debts, 'But I did not care to thank Reason, who had wasted so much effort upon me.'[71] The status of Reason is thus undermined, another victim of meanings that are uncertain but nevertheless critically directed.

Jean also called into question the kind of social status and recognition that university men should enjoy by entering the longstanding debate about the true nature of nobility.[72] Nature attacks the traditional nobility by arguing that she makes all men alike, and that nobility comes from virtue rather than birth. Those born into noble families therefore have to display virtue to merit the title that their ancestors previously won.

> And if anyone, piquing himself on his nobility, dares contradict me and say that noblemen, as the people call them, are superior in condition, by virtue of their noble birth, to those who till the ground or work for their living, then I will reply that no one is noble whose mind is not set on virtue, nor is anyone base except on account of his vices, which make him seem shocking and stupid. Nobility comes from a virtuous heart, for nobility of family is worthless when the heart lacks virtue. Therefore the nobleman must display the prowess of his forebears, who achieved nobility by dint of considerable effort and who, on leaving the world, took all their virtues with them, leaving their possessions to their heirs, who received nothing else from them. They have the possessions but nothing else of theirs, neither nobility nor worth, unless they earn nobility by their deeds, through their own sense or virtue.[73]

Nature further contends that learned clerks are best placed to become noble because they learn how to be virtuous through study:

> Now clerks have better opportunities to become noble, courteous, and wise ... than do princes or kings who have no scholarship. For, associated in his books with those sciences that are capable of rational proofs and demonstrations, the clerk finds all the evils we should avoid and all the good we can do. He

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 162. [70] *Ibid.*, p. 328.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 335.
[72] For the classical roots of this debate, see Paré, *Les idées et les lettres aux XIIIe siècle*, p. 108.
[73] *Romance of the Rose*, p. 287.

finds worldly events recorded there, just as they occurred in word and deed; in the lives of the ancients he finds all the baseness of the base and all the deeds of courteous men, the whole of courtesy. In short, he finds everything that we should avoid or cultivate written in a book, as a result of which all clerks, whether masters or disciples, are noble, or should be so.[74]

Study was therefore an alternative to arms as a route to nobility. Knights could win noble status, but 'We ought also to honour the clerk who willingly undertakes mental exertions and concentrates upon pursuing the virtues that he finds written in his book.'[75] This was a bold claim for the status of the learned, but it was also to seek status in terms that had long existed outside the world of learning and did not derive from the university. Scholarly identity was now less distinct because it was conceived in terms that blurred and perhaps even removed boundaries between scholars and the rest of society.

Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Romance of the Rose* undermined the intellectual processes and the distinctive claims to social status that were valued within the university, but by using all the intellectual tools and sophistication that the university had to offer. Theologians in particular were mocked, and the mendicants who played such a strong role in the faculty of theology were bitterly criticized. Theological teaching on sex was subverted, especially with regard to sexual pleasure, the very issue on which theologians failed to establish an agreed view. Parts of learned discourse were knowingly presented in conjunction with alien ideas to produce entertaining distortions. Scholars were to be celebrated not as masters but as nobles, and therefore in terms that applied outside the university. Most threatening of all, the possibility of certain meaning was denied. If meaning was always unstable, neither authoritative texts nor reason could be deployed effectively to generate authoritative knowledge, and the university's goals were unrealizable. Disordered meanings could be deployed critically to subvert apparently authoritative knowledge, but it was not then possible to assert anything else with certainty. Jean was an anti-intellectual intellectual who presented a profound challenge to the university, especially the theologians, and did so in the vernacular for an audience outside the university.

Marguerite Porete and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*

Marguerite Porete wrote *The Mirror of Simple Souls* in Old French around the beginning of the fourteenth century.[76] Very little is known

[74] *Ibid.* [75] *Ibid.*, p. 288.

[76] There are two excellent modern translations: Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. E. L. Babinsky (New York, 1993); Margaret Porette, *The Mirror of Simple*

about her life, and almost all the surviving evidence was generated by her second and final trial for heresy.[77] While the ecclesiastical authorities evidently thought that she disseminated her views to others, nothing is known of the circles in which she moved. She is usually described as a beguine, but she was certainly not typical of such women. Her book was first condemned by Guy of Colmieu, who was bishop of Cambrai between 1296 and 1306, and she had to watch while the book was publicly burned in Valenciennes, from where she perhaps originated. The bishop forbade her to possess or use the book, and made it clear that if she did so or tried to disseminate its contents she would be handed over to secular justice. Evidently she was not daunted, and it was probably now that she added another section to the *Mirror* (chapters 123–39), and then found three theologians willing to evaluate the work. She subsequently added a statement to the *Mirror* indicating that they had given it varying degrees of approval. The first was a Franciscan who judged that the book was inspired by the Holy Spirit, but that few should be allowed to see it, although he also admitted that he did not understand it himself. The second was a Cistercian who stated that the book spoke the truth. The third was the Parisian master of theology, Godfrey of Fontaines, who advised that access to the book should be restricted lest people be led astray, but that it described 'divine practice'.[78] It seems

Souls, trans. E. Colledge, J. C. Marler and J. Grant (Notre Dame, IN, 1999). Reading them in conjunction with the Old French and Latin texts, I sometimes prefer one and sometimes the other. I have quoted from the Babinsky translation simply because I suspect that texts in the Classics of Western Spirituality series are likely to be more widely available. It will be cited henceforth as *Mirror*.

[77] The evidence is gathered in P. Verdeyen, 'Le procès d'inquisition contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309–1310)', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 81 (1986): 47–94. For summaries of what is known of her life, see E. Colledge, J. C. Marler and J. Grant, 'Introductory Interpretative Essay', in Margaret Porette, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Colledge, Marler and Grant, pp. xxxvi–xliii; R. E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 71–2; R. E. Lerner, 'An "Angel of Philadelphia" in the reign of Philip the Fair: the case of Guiard of Cressonessart', in W. C. Jordan, B. McNab and T. F. Ruiz (eds.), *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer* (Princeton, 1976), pp. 343–64 at 345–7; R. E. Lerner, 'New light on *The Mirror of Simple Souls*', *Speculum* 85 (2010): 91–116 at 92–5, 107–8; B. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)*, The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism 3 (New York, 1998), pp. 244–5; R. A. O'Sullivan, 'The school of love: Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*', *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 143–62 at 146–7; M. G. Sargent, 'The annihilation of Marguerite Porete', *Viator* 28 (1997): 253–79 at 256–7, 265.

[78] The approval is translated at *Mirror*, pp. 221–2. The Middle English translation has it at the beginning of the text, while the Latin version has it at the end. For closer analysis, see S. L. Field, 'The Master and Marguerite: Godfrey of Fontaines' praise of *The Mirror of Simple Souls*', *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009): 136–49; K. Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), pp. 278–80.

that Marguerite then presented the *Mirror* to John, bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, presumably in the hope that he too would find it acceptable. This led to her arrest, in late 1308, and she was eventually sent to Paris where the Dominican inquisitor William of Paris took charge of her case. Marguerite, however, refused to answer questions despite excommunication and constant pressure. In April 1310 twenty-one Parisian masters of theology considered fifteen articles extracted from the *Mirror*, and pronounced them to be heretical. A group of four masters of canon law then ruled that she was a relapsed heretic and should be handed over to the secular authorities unless she confessed, in which case she should be imprisoned for life. Marguerite was burned to death on 1 June 1310.

Despite the efforts of the ecclesiastical authorities, the *Mirror* not only survived in Old French, but during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was translated into Latin twice, Italian twice and English once, though Marguerite ceased to be known as the author.[79] The text is complex, not least because Marguerite herself made additions and insertions.[80] There are frequent references to the 'hearers' of the book, so presumably it was meant to be read out loud.[81] It consists of an extended conversation between personifications, most of which represent different ways of knowing or levels of understanding. The chief protagonists are Reason, Love and Soul. Reason is supported by Intellect of Reason, and Love by Height of Intellect of Love, while a host of other voices appear as required. Reason is endlessly baffled and confused by Love's teaching, and the conversation is mainly driven by Reason's questions and requests for explanation. As Love puts it in chapter 2, everything will be explained 'through the Intellect of Love and following the questions of Reason'.[82] Marguerite attached great importance to questions, as she made clear at the start of the section she added later: 'by questions one can wander very far, and by questions one is directed to the way'.[83] Wandering is an apt way to describe the book's structure. In the early chapters, Love is pressed to explain the key points for 'Actives', 'Contemplatives'

[79] P. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 217; R. Guarnieri, 'Il <<miroir des simples ames>> di Margherita Porete', *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 4 (1965): 501–635 at 504–9; Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, pp. 72–4; Sargent, 'The annihilation', p. 261. For a summary of recent scholarship on the translations, see Lerner, 'New light', pp. 91–116.

[80] Sargent, 'The annihilation', pp. 258–9, 264–5.

[81] But see O'Sullivan, 'The school of love', pp. 157–9, for the view that hearing was 'a key metaphor for meditative reading', while granting that the *Mirror* may have been read out.

[82] *Mirror*, 2, p. 81. [83] *Ibid.*, 123, p. 202.

and 'the common folk', but thereafter a clear linear structure is hard to detect. The result, and this was perhaps the intended structure, was a high degree of repetition, with the same issues being treated again and again.[84] Furthermore, Reason frequently asks for explanation of specific passages from earlier in the book, and Love obliges. As a result, the text generates its own internal gloss, as Marguerite acknowledged when she had the Soul refer to 'the glosses of this book' and Love urge the book's audience to 'grasp the gloss'.[85]

While Marguerite did not provide her book with a linear structure, there was such a pattern in her conception of the soul's spiritual progress. At the start of the *Mirror*, Marguerite indicated that she envisaged a movement through seven stages. The first line of the first chapter noted that the soul, 'touched by God and removed from sin at the first stage of grace, is carried by divine graces to the seventh stage of grace'. At the end of the first chapter, Love affirms that there are seven stages and that 'the Soul disposes herself to all the stages before she comes to perfect being'.[86] The *Mirror* is then devoted to consideration of the stage at which the soul is annihilated and unencumbered. That this is the fifth stage is not made clear until chapter 58, and the full seven stages are not set out as an ascent until chapter 118. For the sake of a clarity that Marguerite perhaps deliberately withheld, it is worth briefly setting out the seven stages.[87]

At the first stage, the soul is concerned to obey God's commandments: 'the Soul, who is touched by God through grace and stripped of her power of sin, intends to keep for the rest of her life, that is until death, the commandments of God'. This stage is characterized by fear, 'the Soul regards and considers, through great fear, that God has commanded her to love Him with all her heart, and also her neighbour as herself', and the task seems all-consuming.[88]

The second stage involves going beyond just obeying commandments in order to pursue evangelical perfection:

> the Soul considers that God counsels His special lovers to go beyond what He commands. That one is not a lover who can refrain from accomplishing all that he knows pleases his beloved. But the creature abandons self and strains self

[84] For perceptive comments on structure, see N. Watson, 'Misrepresenting the untranslatable: Marguerite Porete and the *Mirouer des Simples Ames*', *New Comparison* 12 (1991): 124–37 at 126–7.

[85] *Mirror*, 60, p. 138 and 82, p. 158.

[86] *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 80–1.

[87] For discussion of the way in which the seven stages also relate to three types of souls and three types of death, see McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, pp. 257–60.

[88] *Mirror*, 118, p. 189.

above all to do the counsels of men, in the work of mortification of nature, in despising riches, delights and honours, in order to accomplish the perfection of the evangelical counsel of which Jesus Christ is the exemplar. Thus [the Soul] fears neither the loss of possessions, nor people's words, nor the feebleness of the body, for her beloved does not fear them, and so neither can the Soul who is overtaken by Him.[89]

Thus the soul now tries to imitate Christ, fear diminishes, and there is the first sign of loss of self.

At the third stage, the soul abandons good works because they mean so much to her and therefore constitute the most precious thing that she can give up for the sake of her beloved. Thus she realizes that 'she does not love anything except these works of goodness, and for this reason she does not know what to give love if she does not sacrifice this'. Moreover, her will is sustained by the pleasure that she derives from good works, so giving up good works is a significant step in undermining her own will: 'she relinquishes such works from which she has such delights, and she puts the will to death which had life from this'. Thus 'she obliges herself to obey another will, in abstaining from work and from will, in fulfilling another will, in order to destroy her own will'. Marguerite further explained the point of this self-destruction in terms of creating space for love to fill: 'it is necessary to be pulverized in breaking and bruising the self in order to enlarge the place where love would want to be'.[90]

The fourth stage seems to be an intensification of what has been achieved at the third stage. The soul 'is drawn by the height of love into the delight of thought through meditation. And she relinquishes all exterior labours and obedience to another through the height of contemplation.' Marguerite explained that the soul is so intoxicated by love and joy that she cannot imagine a higher state of being. At this stage, however, love is deceiving, and God has still more to give.[91]

It is at the fifth stage that annihilation of the soul occurs as the soul's will dissolves into the will of God:

[the Soul] sees by Light that the will must will the Divine Will alone without any other will, and that for this purpose this will was given. And thus the Soul removes herself from this will, and the will is separated from the Soul and dissolves itself, and [the will] gives and renders itself to God, whence it was first taken, without retaining anything of its own in order to fulfill the perfect Divine Will, which cannot be fulfilled in the Soul without such a gift, so that the Soul might not have warfare or deficiency. Such a gift accomplishes this

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 189. [90] *Ibid.*, p. 190. [91] *Ibid.*, pp. 190–1.

perfection in her and so transforms her into the nature of Love, who delights her with full peace and satisfies her with divine food.[92]

In chapter 58 Marguerite makes clear that after attaining the fifth stage, the soul cannot drop back down again: 'the Soul keeps herself freely at the fifth stage, without falling to the fourth, because at the fourth she has will, and at the fifth she has none'.[93]

The sixth stage was the last that could be experienced in this life, and here the Soul

sees neither God nor herself, but God sees Himself of Himself in her, for her, without her. God shows to her that there is nothing except Him. And thus this Soul understands nothing except Him, and so loves nothing except Him, praises nothing except Him, for there is nothing except Him.[94]

As Marguerite explains in chapter 58, the annihilated soul at the fifth stage ascends momentarily to the sixth stage before returning to the fifth: 'she is often carried up to the sixth, but this is of little duration. For it is an aperture, like a spark, which quickly closes, in which one cannot long remain'.[95] That the sixth stage was a foretaste of the seventh stage was made clear in chapter 61.[96]

The seventh and final stage was 'glorification' and could only be achieved after death. It was impossible to say anything about this stage since 'we will have no understanding until our soul has left our body'.[97]

Although she had not yet set it out in detail, Marguerite commented on the overall shape of this ascent in chapter 61. Her first point was that there was a huge gap between each stage:

there are seven stages, each one of higher intellect than the former and without comparison to each other. As one might compare a drop of water to the total ocean, which is very great, so one might speak of the difference between the first stage of grace and the second, and so on with the rest: there is no comparison.

Her second point, however, was that nonetheless the first four stages had something in common, and the really great divide came with the ascent to the fifth stage:

Even so, of the first four stages, none is so high that the Soul does not still live in some great servitude. But the fifth stage is in the freeness of charity, for this stage is unencumbered from all things.[98]

[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 191–2. [93] *Ibid.*, 58, p. 135.
[94] *Ibid.*, 118, p. 193. [95] *Ibid.*, 58, p. 135.
[96] *Ibid.*, 61, p. 138. [97] *Ibid.*, 118, pp. 193–4.
[98] *Ibid.*, 61, p. 138.

So, for Marguerite the greatest jump was between the fourth and fifth stages, and it was decisive because the soul could not fall back down again. From the fifth stage the now annihilated soul would enjoy momentary experiences of the sixth stage which was a glimpse of the seventh stage which awaited after death. The real focus of the *Mirror* as a whole, however, was on the fifth stage.

From the outset, Marguerite stressed that the *Mirror*, and therefore the fifth stage in the ascent, was difficult to understand and that humility was required. The verse prologue began:

You who would read this book,
If you indeed wish to grasp it,
Think about what you say,
For it is very difficult to comprehend;
Humility, who is the keeper of the treasury of
Knowledge
And the mother of the other Virtues,
Must overtake you.[99]

Moreover, Marguerite repeatedly stressed that the *Mirror* offered understanding that was beyond even masters of theology. The verse prologue at least implied that with humility they might get somewhere:

Theologians and other clerks,
You will not have the intellect for it,
No matter how brilliant your abilities,
If you do not proceed humbly.[100]

In chapter 5, however, Love makes it clear that the annihilated soul 'does not seek divine knowledge among the masters of this age'.[101] Moreover, in chapter 9 Love simply declares that learned masters, including theologians, will not be able to make sense of the way in which the annihilated soul no longer possesses will: 'none of the masters of the natural senses, nor any of the masters of Scripture, nor those who remain in the love of the obedience to the Virtues, none perceive this, nor will they perceive what is intended'.[102] Marguerite thus set herself apart from and indeed very much above mere masters of theology.

In large part this was because she held the knowledge with which she was concerned to be shaped by love and not at all by reason. As far as she was concerned, she was therefore operating at a level far above that which could be attained by use of reason. Again, this is made clear in

[99] *Ibid.*, verse prologue, p. 79. See also Love's first speech in chapter 1; 1, p. 80.
[100] *Ibid.*, verse prologue, p. 79.
[101] *Ibid.*, 5, p. 83. [102] *Ibid.*, 9, p. 87.

the verse prologue as she continues to address 'theologians and other clerks':

And may Love and Faith, together,
Cause you to rise above Reason,
[Since] they are the ladies of the house.
Even Reason witnesses
In the Thirteenth Chapter of this book,
And with no shame about it,
That Love and Faith make her live
And she does not free herself from them,
For they have lordship over her,
Which is why she must humble herself.
Humble, then, your wisdom
Which is based on Reason,
And place all your fidelity
in those things which are given
By Love, illuminated through Faith.
And thus you will understand this book
Which makes the Soul live by love.[103]

Thereafter Reason is repeatedly belittled. In chapter 12 the Soul mocks Reason for persistently failing to understand:

Ah, Intellect of Reason, says the Annihilated Soul, how you are so discerning! You take the shell and leave the kernel, for your intellect is too low, hence you cannot perceive so loftily as is necessary for the one who wishes to perceive the being of which we speak.[104]

As indicated in the verse prologue, Reason accepts the superior understanding that Love offers:

Thus I say to all, that none will grasp this book with my intellect unless they grasp it by the virtue of Faith, and by the power of Love, who are my mistresses because I obey them in all things.[105]

This submission does not, however, bring an end to the denigration of Reason. Love later informs Reason that she 'will always be one-eyed, you and all those who are fed by your doctrine'.[106] The Soul describes those who live by Reason's counsel as 'beasts and donkeys'.[107] As another way of thinking about progress to the fifth stage and annihilation, Marguerite suggested that three deaths were necessary, of sin, of will and finally of reason. Reason in fact dies in chapter 87, but reappears to

[103] *Ibid.*, verse prologue, p. 79.
[104] *Ibid.*, 12, p. 93. [105] *Ibid.*, 13, p. 95.
[106] *Ibid.*, 43, p. 122. [107] *Ibid.*, 68, p. 143.

keep on asking questions.[108] The *Mirror* thus associated reason with the theologians, and expressed nothing but contempt for it, along with an overwhelming sense of superiority.

While Marguerite insisted that reason offered no way of understanding her concept of the annihilation of the soul, her attempts to explain it focused above all on the will. Her key point was that the annihilated soul had lost her own will, and that God now willed through her, and this was articulated repeatedly by Love:

it is no longer her will which wills, but now the will of God wills in her.[109]

she cannot do anything if it is not the will of God, and also she cannot will some other thing.[110]

all that this Soul wills in consent is what God wills that she will, and this she wills in order to accomplish the will of God, no longer for the sake of her own will. And she cannot will this by herself, but it is the will of God which wills it in her.[111]

Now listen and grasp well, hearers of this book, the true intellect by which this book speaks in different places, that the Annihilated Soul neither possesses will, nor is able to possess it, nor is able to will to possess it, and in this the divine will is perfectly accomplished.[112]

the Unencumbered Soul possesses no longer any will to will or not-will, except only to will the will of God, and to accept in peace the divine ordinance.[113]

In essence, what Marguerite was trying to convey was that God's will did not exist in the annihilated soul alongside her own will; the only will operating in the soul was God's will. The result was an unequal union in which the annihilated soul 'loses her name in the One in whom she is melted and dissolved through Himself and in Himself'. Love likened her to the water in a named river, for example the Seine or the Aisne, which then loses that name when it flows into the sea simply to become part of the sea.[114] Love even declares that 'this Soul is God by the condition of Love'.[115]

Attaining this state meant understanding the emptiness and meaninglessness of all human understanding. Love comments that 'the more this Soul has understanding of the divine goodness, the more perfectly she understands that she understands nothing about it, compared to one spark of His goodness, for His goodness is not comprehended except by Himself'.[116] So in one sense the soul has a higher form of understanding, but it is an understanding that she understands nothing, so 'she knows

[108] *Ibid.*, 60, p. 137; 72–3, p. 147; 87, pp. 162–3.
[109] *Ibid.*, 7, p. 85. [110] *Ibid.*, 11, p. 90.
[111] *Ibid.*, p. 92. [112] *Ibid.*, 12, p. 92.
[113] *Ibid.*, 13, p. 96. [114] *Ibid.*, 82, p. 158.
[115] *Ibid.*, 21, p. 104. [116] *Ibid.*, 5, p. 83.

all and she knows nothing'.[117] Or, as Love explains at greater length, 'this Soul is so well established that if she possessed all the understanding of all the creatures who ever were and who are and who are to come, so it would seem to her as nothing, compared to what she loves, which never was understood, is not now, and never will be'.[118] The realization that there could be no genuine understanding of God was accompanied by an intense awareness of the inadequacy of anything that could be said about God. As the Soul says to Love, 'God is none other than the One of whom one can understand nothing perfectly. For He alone is my God, about whom one does not know how to say a word.' The Soul concludes that when she talks about Love, 'I slander because everything I say is nothing but slander about your goodness.'[119] Ultimately, given the annihilated soul's acknowledgment that God was beyond both understanding and words, words were abandoned: 'Such creatures know no longer how to speak of God.'[120] In the end, the annihilated soul must fall silent.

There was, however, an obvious paradox in Marguerite's position. She had to use words to explain the inadequacy of language, and to generate an understanding that true understanding was beyond words. To do this, she pushed language to the limits of meaning, using the apophatic strategies of paradox and contradiction. She referred frequently to the annihilated soul 'who has become nothing, thus possesses everything, and so possesses nothing; she wills everything and she wills nothing; she knows all and she knows nothing'.[121] Similarly, there was Farnearness, 'which we call a spark in the manner of an aperture and quick closure', and which 'receives the Soul at the fifth stage and places her at the sixth'.[122] Reason names this strategy: they are 'double words', and they are difficult to understand.[123] Marguerite did not intend the *Mirror* to be easy reading, and it was through bafflement that her audience might find understanding beyond understanding.

One of the most controversial aspects of Marguerite's approach was her insistence that the annihilated soul took leave of the virtues and 'is saved by faith without works'.[124] Three of the fifteen articles for which she was condemned are known to us, and two of them concern this issue.[125] She made the point repeatedly throughout the *Mirror*. The Soul, for example, tells Love how she takes leave of the virtues:

[117] *Ibid.*, 7, p. 85. [118] *Ibid.*, 11, p. 90. [119] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[120] *Ibid.*, 18, p. 101. [121] *Ibid.*, 7, p. 85. [122] *Ibid.*, 58, p. 135.
[123] *Ibid.*, 13, p. 94. [124] *Ibid.*, 5, p. 82.
[125] Colledge, Marler and Grant, 'Introductory Interpretative Essay', p. xlv; Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 75; McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 245, n. 243; Verdeyen, 'Le procès d'inquisition', pp. 51, 88.

> I confess it to you, Lady Love, says this Soul, there was a time when I belonged to them, but now it is another time. Your courtliness has placed me outside their service. And thus to them I can now say and sing: Virtues, I take my leave of you forever.[126]

Love goes on to explain what this means: 'This Soul, says Love, takes account of neither shame nor honour, of neither poverty nor wealth, of neither anxiety nor ease, of neither love nor hate, of neither hell nor of paradise.'[127] And Love elaborates:

> Whoever would ask such free Souls, sure and peaceful, if they would want to be in purgatory, they would say no; or if they would want to be certain of their salvation in this life, they would say no; or if they would want to be in paradise, they would say no ... Such a soul neither desires nor despises poverty nor tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fast nor prayer, and gives to Nature all that is necessary, without remorse of conscience.[128]

Marguerite was obviously aware how shocking this sounded because Reason repeatedly expressed dismay at this apparent rejection of fundamental values and practices espoused by the church:

> This Soul no longer has any sentiment of grace, nor desire of spirit, since she has taken leave of the Virtues who offer the manner of living well to every good soul, and without these Virtues none can be saved nor come to perfection of life; and whoever possesses them cannot be deceived. Nevertheless, this Soul takes leave of them. Is she not out of her mind, the Soul who speaks thus?[129]

Marguerite agreed that the moral teaching of the church was important for most people. At the start of the *Mirror*, Love acknowledges that the church's commands 'are of necessity for salvation for all: nobody can have grace with a lesser way'.[130] When explaining the annihilated soul's relationship with nature, Love also recognizes that 'one dare not speak overtly about it. And no doubt on account of the simple intellects of other creatures, lest they misapprehend to their damage.'[131] So, on at least one occasion in the *Mirror*, Marguerite showed awareness that some people might be seduced by her words and simply behave in an immoral fashion that she agreed would lead to their damnation. This was not, however, a dominant concern in the *Mirror*. Marguerite was only interested in the annihilated souls, and it is not immediately clear (unsurprisingly) what she had in mind for them.

There was no doubt that despite taking leave of the virtues the annihilated soul continued to have some sort of relationship with them.

[126] *Mirror*, 6, p. 84. [127] *Ibid.*, 7, p. 84.
[128] *Ibid.*, 9, pp. 86–7. [129] *Ibid.*, 8, p. 85.
[130] *Ibid.*, 3, p. 81. [131] *Ibid.*, 17, p. 100.

According to Love, responding to Reason's incredulity, 'such Souls possess better the Virtues than any other creatures, but they do not possess any longer the practice of them, for these Souls no longer belong to the Virtues as they used to'.[132] If this meant that annihilated souls could behave contrary to the virtues and still be saved, this was scarcely reassuring. Marguerite's preferred explanation seems to have been in terms of the virtues and the soul exchanging places in a hierarchy. Love tells an improbable story about a servant becoming wiser and richer than his master, and therefore leaving to serve someone else. His former master then decides to stay with his former servant and to obey him because of his now greater worth. In just this way the soul first obeyed the virtues, at Reason's behest, but then 'gained and learned so much with the Virtues that she is now superior to the Virtues, for she has within her all that the Virtues know how to teach and more, without comparison'. The soul and the virtues were still together, but the soul was now in the superior position.[133] This did not really clarify exactly how an annihilated soul might be expected to behave. There are, however, a number of occasions in the *Mirror* where Marguerite seems to qualify her more provocative statements and make them 'safe'. One has been the subject of much debate. First, as we have seen, Love declares that 'Such a soul neither desires nor despises poverty nor tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fast nor prayer, and gives to Nature all that is necessary, without remorse of conscience.' Then she immediately adds: 'But such Nature is so well ordered through the transformation by unity of Love, to whom the will of this Soul is conjoined, that Nature demands nothing which is prohibited.'[134] On the face of it, Marguerite had first said something outrageous and then pulled back. It has been argued, however, that this second, qualifying statement was a later insertion because it occurs in different places in different versions, and opinions differ as to whether Marguerite was responsible for it.[135] Be that as it may, there are other, textually uncontested, points in the *Mirror* where the same kind of 'safe' interpretation is offered. Once more in response to Reason's anxious questioning, Love explains that the annihilated soul's thought is 'in the Trinity' and 'From this [place] no one falls into sin, and any sin which was ever done ... is as

[132] *Ibid.*, 8, pp. 85–6. [133] *Ibid.*, 21, pp. 103–4. [134] *Ibid.*, 9, p. 87.
[135] E. Colledge and R. Guarnieri, 'The glosses by <<M.N.>> and Richard Methley to <<The Mirror of Simple Souls>>', *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 5 (1968): 357–82 at 362–3; E. Colledge, 'Liberty of spirit: "The Mirror of Simple Souls"', in L. K. Shook (ed.), *Theology of Renewal*, 2 vols. (New York, 1968), vol. 2, pp. 100–17 at 104; Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 76; Lerner, 'New light', pp. 110–14; Sargent, 'The annihilation', pp. 258–9.

displeasing to her will as it is to God's. It is His displeasure itself which gives to this Soul such displeasure.' Furthermore, 'if this Soul, who is at rest so high, could help her neighbours, she would aid them with all her power in their need'.[136] There are therefore moments in the *Mirror* when Marguerite's ideas seem straightforwardly compatible with the conventional teaching of the church. But Marguerite's real concern was to work through the consequences of the annihilation of the will:

> This Soul, says Love, does not do any work for God's sake, nor for her own, nor for her neighbours' either ... But God does it, if He wills, [He] who is able to do it. And if He does not will, it does not matter to her one way or the other; she is always in one state.[137]

Having explained that God willed through the annihilated soul which had no will of its own, it simply made no sense to Marguerite to worry about how people in this state would behave. Since God could not be said to sin, how could they? Marguerite made her point, however, in a fashion that was bound to disconcert people and prompt questions.

Even if Marguerite's view of the relationship between the annihilated soul and the virtues was less radical than it might at first seem, her ideas undoubtedly constituted a profound challenge to the role of the priest and the church, and on this matter she not only expressed her thoughts in provocative fashion, but offered no qualifications at all. The annihilated soul was indifferent to masses, sermons, fasts, prayers and the like partly because she had no will of her own, but also because she had a direct relationship with God that left no function for the church. As Love puts it, likening the annihilated soul to the seraphim, 'She no longer wants anything which comes by a mediary.'[138] Throughout the *Mirror*, the church is presented in an unflattering if not disparaging light. Love refers to the church run by the clergy as 'Holy Church the Little', which is governed by Reason, as distinct from 'Holy Church the Great', which is governed by Love.[139] The Soul queries whether those who are not annihilated souls should be able to attain salvation at all since through the church even murderers will be saved if they repent.[140] According to Love, the Soul is 'in the greatest perfection of being, and she is closest to the Farnearness, when she no longer takes Holy Church as exemplar in her life'.[141] It is hardly surprising that John Baconthorpe, who was studying in Paris during Marguerite's trial, called the *Mirror* 'a book against the clergy'.[142]

136 *Mirror*, 16, p. 99. 137 *Ibid.*, 71, p. 145.
138 *Ibid.*, 5, p. 83. 139 *Ibid.*, 19, p. 101.
140 *Ibid.*, 121, p. 197. 141 *Ibid.*, 134, p. 217.
142 As quoted by Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 206; Sargent, 'The annhilation', p. 257.

It is not easy to establish what the *Mirror* meant to Marguerite herself. The Soul is generally held to represent her, and indeed the first time the Soul speaks in chapter 1 she is introduced as 'the Soul who had this book written'.[143] Later, when Love praises the Soul, she refers to the Soul as 'this precious pearl', and 'pearl' is 'marguerite' in Old French.[144] As befits a soul in transformation, however, the question of authorship is not straightforward. In chapter 97, 'this Soul who wrote this book' says: 'I was so foolish at the time when I wrote it; but Love did it for my sake and at my request.'[145] Indeed the process of annihilation raises questions about how Marguerite understood the process of writing. If she thought she was an annihilated soul, how could she write at all when she should have fallen silent? If she did not consider that she had reached that state, how did she think that she knew anything about it? At the start of the *Mirror* Love tells 'a little exemplum of love in the world'. The daughter of a king heard of King Alexander and fell in love with him on the basis of his reputation. Distraught that she could not actually see him, she 'had an image painted which would represent the semblance of the king she loved', and this helped her to dream of him. Similarly, the Soul explains, she learned about a great king, and could find no comfort because of the immense distance between them. Then, 'He gave me this book, which makes present in some fashion His love itself.'[146] The book is thus presented as a kind of devotional aid for Marguerite. More significantly, however, subsequent passages present the writing of the book as part of the process by which Marguerite became an annihilated soul. The Soul says of the book that Love 'tells me that I complete all my enterprises in it'.[147] Later, to quote more of a passage cited earlier, the Soul emphasizes the nature of the task:

> I was so foolish at the time when I wrote [this book]; but Love did it for my sake and at my request, that I might undertake something which one could neither do, nor think, nor say.[148]

Thus Love wanted her to take on the impossible, to try to find words for what was beyond words. Towards what was originally the end of the

143 *Mirror*, 1, p. 80. For the view that the Soul represents the author, see Sargent, 'The annhilation', p. 258; Watson, 'Misrepresenting the untranslatable', pp. 129–30. But for the suggestion that 'The motive for her putting almost everything in her book in the mouths of projections ... might be to intimate that it is not she who is speaking; and this would leave open the possibility that she is, or is becoming, the free soul she aspires to be', see Dronke, *Women Writers*, p. 226. For a judicious assessment, see McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 248.
144 *Mirror*, 52, p. 129. 145 *Ibid.*, 97, p. 171. 146 *Ibid.*, 1, p. 80.
147 *Ibid.*, 11, p. 92. 148 *Ibid.*, 97, p. 171.

book, 'the Soul who causes this book to be written' offers an apology to annihilated souls:

I excuse myself ... to all those who remain in nothingness and who are fallen from love into such being. For I have made this book very large through words, [though] it seems to you very small, insofar as I am able to understand you. Now please pardon me by your courtesy, for necessity has no law. I did not know to whom to speak my intention. Now I understand, on account of your peace and on account of the truth, that [this book] is of the lower life. Cowardice has guided [this book], which has given its perception over to Reason through the answers of Love to Reason's petitions. And so [this book] has been created by human knowledge and the human senses; and the human reason and the human senses know nothing about inner love, inner love from divine knowledge. My heart is drawn so high and fallen so low at the same time that I cannot complete [this book] ... I have said, says this Soul, that Love caused [the book] to be written through human knowledge and through willing it by the transformation of my intellect with which I was encumbered, as it appears in this book. For Love made the book in unencumbering my spirit.[149]

Marguerite thus acknowledges that her book, written in words, necessarily belongs to the lower realm of human knowledge and reason. But through the writing of the book, Love has transformed her understanding. In so far as her understanding is expressed in the book, it is still encumbered; now, however, it is unencumbered and she cannot go on writing. The book is inadequate, and she has left it behind.

While Marguerite valued the process of writing for herself, she also had an audience in mind for the book, whatever its unavoidable limitations. She divided that audience into annihilated souls, those who would be annihilated souls in the future, and those who were never going to be annihilated souls. Having written about the momentary experience of the sixth stage of the ascent, the Soul explains that she must also discuss less elevated topics: 'If you have heard in these words a high matter, says this Soul to the hearers of this book, do not be displeased if I speak afterward about little things, for it is necessary for me to do so if I want to accomplish the enterprise of my goal – not, she says, for the sake of those who are this, but for those who are not who yet will be, and will beg continuously as long as they are with themselves.'[150] Here Marguerite's stated purpose is not to transform herself, but to reach out to those who will eventually become annihilated souls. She makes the same point when the Soul says that the book has been made 'so that you little ones might be of this sort without interruption, at least in will, if you still have it', and she adds for those who are already

[149] *Ibid.*, 119, pp. 194–5. [150] *Ibid.*, 59, p. 136.

unencumbered that 'at least you could explain the glosses of this book'.[151] Later the Soul says that she sings 'for those who are not yet unencumbered, so that they might hear something about freeness, and whatever else is necessary until they arrive at this stage'.[152] The fullest analysis of Marguerite's audience and the expected responses, however, is presented by Love:

You ladies, to whom God has abundantly given this life by His divine goodness without withholding anything, and not only this life which we describe, but also the one of whom no human speaks, you will recognize your practice in this book. And those who are not of this kind, nor were, nor will be, will not feel this being, nor understand it. They cannot do it, nor will they do it. They are not, as you know, of the lineage of which we speak ... But those who are not this now – but they are so in God, which is why they will be so – will understand this being and sense it, through the strength of the lineage from which they are and will be, more strongly indeed than those who have not understood it and sensed it. And such folk of whom we speak, who are this way and will be, will recognize, as soon as they hear it, their lineage from which they come.[153]

So annihilated souls will recognize that the book is about them. Those who are never going to be annihilated souls will not be able to understand or respond to it in any way. Those who will be annihilated souls will understand and respond, indeed they will immediately recognize 'their lineage' so that they come to grasp who they really are. That these future annihilated souls might also have to make a sustained effort, however, was indicated in the section that Marguerite added to the *Mirror*. It began:

I wish to speak about some considerations for the sad ones who ask the way to the land of freeness, considerations which indeed helped me at the time when I was one of the sad ones, when I lived from milk and pabulum, and when I was still ignorant. And these considerations helped me to suffer and endure during the time when I was off the path, and then helped me to find the path.[154]

In this additional section Marguerite offered the benefit of her experience, giving practical advice on the kind of reflection that would help those who would eventually become annihilated souls. Marguerite therefore wrote the *Mirror* to help future annihilated souls recognize themselves as such, and to explain how they could realize their ultimate goal.[155]

[151] *Ibid.*, 60, p. 138. [152] *Ibid.*, 80, p. 155.
[153] *Ibid.*, 98, p. 172. [154] *Ibid.*, 123, p. 202.
[155] For persuasive analysis of the *Mirror* as a didactic work that must be understood in the context of beguine education and meditative training, see O'Sullivan, 'The school of love', pp. 143–62.

But who were these annihilated souls? They could be anyone and they could be anywhere. Love offers explanations to Actives, Contemplatives and the common folk, but these were not important distinctions because the same message was given to them all. Moreover, it was clearly envisaged that annihilated souls might be found amongst the lower orders since Reason wants annihilated souls to be described to the common folk 'of whom some will be able perchance to come to this stage'.[156] Social hierarchies were therefore irrelevant. It was also difficult, if not impossible, to identify them. Love comments first that 'few people know where these Souls are'.[157] She then goes further, saying that 'a thing which God has created knows not how to find these Souls'.[158] Addressing Faith, Hope and Charity, she explains that 'who they are ... is known neither to you nor to them, which is why Holy Church cannot know it'.[159] Annihilated souls were therefore effectively beyond the jurisdiction of the church. The *Mirror* thus challenged notions of social hierarchy and, yet again, the authority of the church.

Notions of social class were, however, extremely important to Marguerite. The *Mirror* is rich in courtly language and imagery, and there are many references to nobility, and occasionally to other social groups. The *exemplum* in the first chapter, for example, features 'a maiden, daughter of a king, of great heart and nobility and also of noble character', and she 'heard tell of the great gentle courtesy and nobility of the king, Alexander'. Here Marguerite was drawing upon the *Roman d'Alexandre*.[160] She frequently associated Love with courtesy. To give just a few examples, Pure Courtesy and Courtesy of the Goodness of Love have brief speaking parts, and the Soul addresses Love as 'overflowing and abundant lover, and courtesy without measure for my sake'.[161] Fine Love is also identified with divine love; thus, to give just one example, the Soul says that the book can only be understood by one 'whom Fine Love rules'.[162] Those who are at the first stage of the ascent are, again according to the Soul, 'saved in an uncourtly way'.[163] Most important of all, the annihilated soul is noble.[164] Love addresses annihilated souls as 'you most noble ones'.[165] She describes the annihilated soul as 'gently

[156] *Mirror*, 13, p. 94. [157] *Ibid.*, 17, p. 100.
[158] *Ibid.*, 19, p. 101. [159] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[160] O'Sullivan, 'The school of love', p. 159; Sargent, 'The annhilation', p. 267.
[161] *Mirror*, 10, p. 88; 15, p. 98; 38, p. 118.
[162] *Ibid.*, 53, p. 131. [163] *Ibid.*, 62, p. 139.
[164] For extended analysis of Marguerite's treatment of the theme of nobility and lineage, see J. M. Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls* (New York, 2001), esp. pp. 88–107. See also brief comments from Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 233.
[165] *Mirror*, 60, p. 137.

noble in prosperity, and supremely noble in adversity, and excellently noble in all places whatever they might be'.[166] The momentary experience of the sixth stage of the ascent is a 'noble' gift.[167] Love exclaims, 'O very high-born one ... it is well that you have entered the only noble manor, where no one enters if he is not of your lineage and without bastardy.'[168] When future annihilated souls read the *Mirror* and recognized their lineage, they were becoming aware of their noble status. Without doubt this vocabulary reflected Marguerite's debt to vernacular literature and in particular the influence of courtly ideas about love.[169] It also gave her an immensely powerful way of representing the enormity of the gap between the annihilated soul and everyone else, and to express her utter contempt for those who lived by the values and religious practices that she associated with the church. At one point the Soul invites Christ not to bother with those who achieve salvation merely by avoiding mortal sin because they are selfish and 'on account of their rudeness'. Love acknowledges their 'crudity', and the Soul continues:

> This is the manner, says this Soul, of the merchant folk, who in the world are called crude, for indeed crude they are. For the gentleman does not know how to mingle in the marketplace or how to be selfish. But I will tell you, says this Soul, in what I appease myself concerning such folk. In this, Lady Love, that they are kept outside the court of your secrets, much like a peasant would be kept from the court of a gentleman in the judgment of his peers, where no one can be a part of the court if he is not of correct lineage – and certainly not in the court of a king.[170]

Marguerite's social background is unknown, but she certainly knew how to deploy the noble's disdain for merchants and peasants.[171] She used it to denigrate conventional piety and the church, but it also had implications for the culture of learning. Marguerite was deeply learned and the *Mirror* was a work of great intellect. Yet she adopted a vocabulary that was not from the world of university learning in order to emphasize a

[166] *Ibid.*, 85, p. 160. [167] *Ibid.*, 58, p. 136. [168] *Ibid.*, 52, p. 129.
[169] See E. L. Babinsky, 'The use of courtly language in *Le Mirouer des simples ames anienties* by Marguerite Porete', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 4 (1987): 91–106; McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, pp. 246, 248; B. Newman, '"*La mystique courtoise*": thirteenth-century beguines and the art of love', in *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 137–67; O'Sullivan, 'The school of love', pp. 159–60. For analysis of literary form, see Dronke, *Women Writers*, pp. 218–27.
[170] *Mirror*, 63, p. 140.
[171] Lerner, 'New light', p. 108 suggests that she was 'a woman of means', given how much the parchment for a copy of her work would have cost. At p. 108, note 74, he further comments that 'she most likely came from a wealthy patrician background that had absorbed aristocratic manners and prejudices'.

form of knowing (or unknowing) that she considered superior to anything university theologians had to offer.

Like Jean de Meun, Marguerite Porete attacked reason, undermined the value of knowledge that was based on reason, and called into question the ability of language to convey truth with certainty. To make her point, she used language in ways that made meaning seem uncertain. But whereas Jean did this by holding every idea and way of knowing in play, without hierarchy, Marguerite very definitely had a hierarchy. Parisian theologians were perfectly comfortable with the idea that divinely inspired knowledge was superior to all human knowledge, but Marguerite chose to disparage everything that was below the experience of the annihilated soul. More than this, she attacked the social and institutional embodiments of human knowledge, making withering comments about the church in general and theologians in particular. Furthermore, she did this as a woman, in the vernacular, and outside any institutional framework. There was nothing to guarantee that she would behave with the virtue necessary to know well, and indeed she herself called into question her regard for virtue. Not only was Marguerite herself independent of any institution, but she envisaged that other annihilated souls would be too. They could come from any social background, and there was no way to identify them. To convey their superior status, however, she borrowed the vocabulary of nobility and courtliness. Evidently institutions of learning were irrelevant to the kind of knowing, or unknowing, that Marguerite championed. She had, however, acquired considerable learning by whatever means, and the *Mirror* was no emotional outpouring. Her anti-intellectual stance was therefore a theoretical challenge to the identity and authority of Parisian masters of theology at several levels, and one that had an existence outside the university.[172]

Eckhart

Eckhart was born around 1260 in Thuringia, and he joined the Dominican order in Erfurt. It is possible that he studied the arts in Paris before attending the Dominican school in Cologne. He then read the Sentences in Paris, before leaving in 1294 to become prior

[172] For a superb account of the various ways in which Parisian clerics, including theologians, represented beguines in sermons and *exempla*, sometimes explicitly comparing the beguine and the Parisian master, see T. S. Miller, 'What's in a name? Clerical representations of Parisian beguines (1200–1328)', *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007): 60–86.

of the Dominican convent in Erfurt and vicar of Thuringia, the latter post involving pastoral responsibility for women's convents. In 1302 he moved to Paris to become a regent master of theology. After one year in this post, he became the first provincial of the newly established Dominican province of Saxonia in northern Germany, a position he held from 1303 to 1311. In 1311 he returned to Paris as a master of theology, this time for two years. From 1313 he spent at least ten years based in Strasburg as vicar-general of the province of Teutonia. During this time, the bishop of Strasburg, John of Zurich, largely supported by the secular clergy, attacked the beguines, demanding that they return to normal lives in their parishes in 1319. Since Eckhart was preaching in women's convents in south Germany, many of which had begun as beguine communities, he is likely to have become involved in these controversies and was probably perceived as a supporter of the beguines by their critics. He also began writing theological works in German at this time. No earlier than 1323 he became head of the Dominican school in Cologne and continued his preaching to popular audiences. In 1325 his work was examined for heresy by Nicholas of Strasburg, who was lector in Eckhart's school and both Dominican and papal visitor to the province of Teutonia. By early 1326, Nicholas had found his work to be entirely orthodox. It has been suggested that this was an attempt to stave off attacks on Eckhart. If so, the attempt failed because later in 1326 inquisitorial proceedings against him were launched by Henry of Virneburg, who had been archbishop of Cologne since 1306. Henry had a long record of hostility to beguines and beghards, considering them to be involved in the heresy of the free spirit. He was a leading figure at the Council of Vienne, where two bulls attacking them were issued, *Cum de quibusdam* and *Ad nostrum*, the latter using some material extracted from Marguerite's *Mirror*.[173] Moreover, he knew the bishop of Strasburg, who was also at the Council of Vienne. Presumably he was therefore well informed about Eckhart's activities in Strasburg, which perhaps explains why he was so relentless in his attack on Eckhart. Several long lists of articles extracted from Eckhart's work were drawn up, and Eckhart composed a response, which survives. In 1327, after preaching in the Dominican church in Cologne, a fellow Dominican read out a statement in Latin upon which Eckhart commented in German, insisting that he was not a heretic and making it clear that he was ready to retract anything that was found to be in error. When

[173] Colledge and Guarnieri, 'The glosses by <<M.N.>>', p. 359; Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, pp. 82–3; McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 246; Miller, 'What's in a name?', pp. 61–2.

he appealed to the pope, proceedings shifted to the papal court in Avignon, so Eckhart went there with several leading Dominicans from his region. The lists of articles were examined by a commission of theologians and another of cardinals, and twenty-eight articles were judged heretical. Eckhart died in Avignon in late 1327 or early 1328, but the process continued, perhaps because the pope was heavily dependent on Henry of Virneburg as a key ally against Lewis of Bavaria, with whom he was locked in conflict over control of Italy. It culminated in 1329 with the bull *In agro dominico*, which listed twenty-six articles that Eckhart had accepted that he preached or wrote, and two further articles which Eckhart had denied preaching. The first fifteen and the additional two articles were condemned as heretical, while the other eleven were deemed highly suspect although possibly open to orthodox interpretation.[174]

A significant proportion of Eckhart's works were written or preached in German, many for a female audience, and the following analysis is based on material taken from them. Many of the sermons were preached to women in Strasburg or Cologne. It must be noted, however, that they have come down to us as *reportationes*, so it is impossible to be certain that they are exactly as Eckhart preached them.[175] The treatise *On the Noble Man* was part of the *Liber Benedictus* which was written in Strasburg and dedicated to Agnes, queen of Hungary, perhaps when she entered the religious life.[176] The treatise *On Detachment* has also been used, although its authenticity has been questioned by some experts in the field.[177]

There can be little doubt that Eckhart knew about Marguerite Porete and her work because for two years from 1311 to 1313 both he and William of Paris, who had led the proceedings against Marguerite, were resident in the Dominican house in Paris. Since William had ordered all copies of the *Mirror* to be handed to him or to the Dominican prior in Paris, it is entirely possible that a copy was kept in the house and that Eckhart read it. Whatever the degree of his familiarity with her work, it

[174] For accounts of Eckhart's life, see O. Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian* (London, 1991), pp. 22–45; B. McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300–1500)*, The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism 4 (New York, 2005), pp. 94–107.

[175] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 72, 127, 239; E. Colledge and B. McGinn, 'Introduction', in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, trans. E. Colledge and B. McGinn (New York, 1981), pp. 66–7.

[176] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, p. 26.

[177] Colledge and McGinn, 'Introduction', in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 68.

has been convincingly argued that he was influenced by her ideas and her language.[178]

Whereas Marguerite wrote about the annihilated or unencumbered soul, however, Eckhart's key term was 'detachment', by which he meant being 'free from all created things'.[179] This definitely included the will, as Eckhart made very clear in his sermon *Beati pauperes spiritu*, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit', where Marguerite's direct influence is most obvious. In this sermon he took poverty as the central theme, stressing from the beginning that he was concerned with internal rather than external poverty. In this sense, according to Eckhart, 'a poor person is someone who desires nothing, knows nothing and possesses nothing'.[180] Treating the first of these characteristics, Eckhart explained that this entailed losing even the will to do God's will:

> as long as it is someone's will to carry out the most precious will of God, such a person does not have the poverty of which we wish to speak. For this person still has a will with which they wish to please God, and this is not true poverty. If we are to have true poverty, then we must be so free of our own created will as we were before we were created. I tell you by the eternal truth that as long as you have the will to perform God's will, and a desire for eternity and for God, you are not yet poor. They alone are poor who will nothing and desire nothing.[181]

Eckhart repeatedly emphasized the need for individuals to return to the state in which they had existed before their creation: 'if we are to be poor in will, then we must will and desire as little as we willed and

[178] E. Colledge and J. C. Marler, '"Poverty of the will": Ruusbroec, Eckhart and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*', in P. Mommaers and N. de Paepe (eds.), *Jan van Ruusbroec: The Sources, Content and Sequels of his Mysticism* (Leuven, 1984), pp. 14–47 at 15, 25–36, 40; Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 65–8; A. Hollywood, 'Suffering transformed: Marguerite Porete, Meister Eckhart, and the problem of women's spirituality', in B. McGinn (ed), *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete* (New York, 1994), pp. 87–113 at 102–10; Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, pp. 1, 183; M. Lichtmann, 'Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart: *The Mirror for Simple Souls* mirrored', in McGinn (ed.), *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, pp. 65–86 at 65, 70–1, 82–6; B. McGinn, 'Love, knowledge and *Unio mystica* in the western Christian tradition', in M. Idel and B. McGinn (eds.), *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York, 1989), pp. 73–8; McGinn, *Harvest of Mysticism*, pp. 99–100; M. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 180–205; D. Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 138, 179–80. For a critical assessment of these analyses, see Lerner, 'New light', p. 112.

[179] *On Detachment* in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 285.

[180] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, trans. O. Davies (London, 1994), sermon 22, p. 203.

[181] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

desired before we came into being. It is in this way that someone is poor who wills nothing.'[182]

Similarly Eckhart stressed the importance of knowing nothing. In *Beati pauperes spiritu*, this too was an essential aspect of true inner poverty:

they who are to have this poverty must live in such a way that they do not know that they do not live either for themselves, for truth or for God. They must rather be free of the knowledge that they do not know, understand or sense that God lives in them. More than this: they must be free of all the knowledge that lives in them.[183]

Thus for Eckhart, knowing nothing had to be so complete that there was no knowledge even of not knowing. This absence of knowledge about the self was again represented as a return to the state in which the individual had existed before being created as an individual: 'we say that we should be as free of self-knowledge as we were before we were created'.[184] Eckhart explained further that blessedness did not lie in either knowledge or love, but in 'a something in the soul which is the source of both knowledge and love, although it does not itself know or love'. This something 'does not possess any knowledge of the fact that God acts in it, rather it is itself that which delights in itself just as God delights in himself'. Eckhart therefore advised, 'We should be so solitary and unencumbered that we do not know that it is God who acts in us', and concluded that the genuinely poor must have 'no knowledge of anything, neither of God, nor of creature, nor of themselves'.[185]

Eckhart pursued the theme of not knowing on many occasions. In the treatise *On the Noble Man*, he acknowledged that 'all people have a natural desire for knowledge'. He further recognized that 'when the self, the soul, the spirit sees God, then it knows itself also as knowing subject: that is, it knows that it sees and knows God'.[186] He completely rejected, however, the view that this was to be blessed:

Even if it is true that the soul would not be blessed without this, it does not follow that this is blessedness, for blessedness consists primarily in the fact that the soul sees God in himself. It is in this that the soul receives the whole of her nature and life and all that she is from the ground of God, knowing nothing of knowledge nor of love, nor of anything else at all.[187]

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 205. [183] *Ibid.* [184] *Ibid.*
[185] *Ibid.*, p. 206.
[186] *Ibid.*, *On the Noble Man*, p. 105.
[187] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

So while knowing that one knows God might be a necessary first step, the soul was not truly blessed until it ceased to be aware of itself as knowing.

In another sermon, *Ubi est qui natus est rex judaeorum*, 'Where is he who is born King of the Jews?', Eckhart explained further what he envisaged. Having emphasized the need to 'enter a forgetfulness and an unknowing', he noted the possible objection that this 'sounds like a lack of something' and that 'God created humanity in order that we should know'. This was, however, to misunderstand the nature of unknowing and to attach too much value to the active:

we must come into a transformed knowing, an unknowing which comes not from ignorance but from knowledge. Then our knowing shall be divine knowledge, and our unknowing shall be ennobled and enriched with supernatural knowing. With respect to this, being passive shall make us more perfect than being active.[188]

Thus to know nothing in Eckhart's sense was to proceed through knowing to unknowing, which meant abandoning all active processes to become passive.

As will already be apparent, willing nothing and knowing nothing involved loss of self. Eckhart discussed 'those who have destroyed themselves as they exist in themselves, in God and in all creatures':

Such people have taken up the lowest position, and God must pour the whole of himself into them – or he would not be God. I declare the good, eternal and everlasting Truth that God must pour himself according to the whole of his capacity into all those who have abandoned themselves to the very ground of their being, and he must do so so completely that he can hold nothing back of all his life, all his being and nature, even of his divinity, which he must pour fully and in a fructifying way into those who have abandoned themselves for God and have taken up the lowest position.[189]

According to Eckhart, therefore, the process of self-destruction necessarily brought God into those who became detached.

The birth of God within the soul was one of Eckhart's major preoccupations, and he wrote a great deal about that part of the soul which was capable of union with God, deploying a vast array of metaphors.[190] As already noted, he referred to 'a something in the soul which is the source of both knowledge and love, although it does not itself know or love', commenting further: 'It has neither a past nor a future, and it is

[188] *Ibid.*, sermon 24, p. 220.
[189] *Ibid.*, sermon 7, p. 134.
[190] See Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 149–57; Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 140.

not something to which anything can be added, for it cannot become larger or smaller.'[191] This 'something' was therefore Godlike in that it existed out of time and was in at least some respects unchangeable. The metaphor of light was even more important to Eckhart:

> I have occasionally spoken of a light in the soul which is uncreated and uncreatable. I constantly return in my sermons to this light, which apprehends God without medium, without concealment and nakedly, just as he is in himself. Indeed, it apprehends him in the act of begetting. I can again say truthfully that this light has more unity with God than it does with any of the soul's faculties, although it coexists with these.[192]

A variant on this image was the spark of the soul:

> Therefore I say that when we turn away from ourselves and from all created things, to that extent we are united and sanctified in the soul's spark, which is untouched by either space or time. This spark is opposed to all creatures and desires nothing but God, naked, just as he is in himself.[193]

The other metaphor that Eckhart frequently used was the ground of the soul. Preaching on Matthew 2.2, 'Where is he who is born King of the Jews?', he answered:

> But I say, as I have often said, that this birth takes place in the soul just as it takes place in eternity, no more and no less. For there is only one birth, and this takes place in the essence and ground of the soul.[194]

In his treatise *On the Noble Man*, he preferred the image of the seed. The inner man is 'the field in which God sows his image and likeness and in which he plants the good seed, which is the root of all wisdom, all skills, all virtues and all goodness: the seed of divine nature', and 'the seed of God grows into God'.[195]

The way in which Eckhart talked about union with God was one of the aspects of his work that was seized upon when he was accused of heresy. The extent to which he presented God and the soul as identical suggested a failure to preserve an adequate distinction between God and those he had created, and thus to constitute a type of pantheism.[196] The notion that there was something uncreated in the soul was also attacked.[197] Eckhart was far from consistent in his use of

[191] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 22, p. 206.
[192] *Ibid.*, sermon 7, p. 135. [193] *Ibid.*
[194] *Ibid.*, sermon 24, p. 215. For brilliant analysis of Eckhart's treatment of the ground of the soul, see McGinn, *Harvest of Mysticism*, pp. 83–93, 118–24.
[195] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *On the Noble Man*, pp. 100–1.
[196] See the tenth of the twenty-six articles attributed to Eckhart in *In agro dominico*; Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 78.
[197] See the first of the two additional articles cited in *In agro dominico*; *ibid.*, p. 80.

metaphors, however, and passages can be found in which he treated these issues in terms that were safely within the bounds of contemporary orthodoxy.[198]

The plethora of metaphors that Eckhart produced, sometimes in seemingly contradictory ways, was at least in part a response to his view of the inadequacy of language when it came to talking about God. In one sermon he observed that 'God is nameless for no one can either speak of him or know him', going on to make his point by subverting the kind of praise conventionally given to God:

> if I say that 'God is good', this is not true. I am good, but God is not good! In fact, I would rather say that I am better than God, for what is good can become better and what can become better can become the best! Now God is not good, and so he cannot become better. Since he cannot become better, he cannot become the best. These three are far from God: 'good', 'better', 'best', for he is wholly transcendent. If I say again that 'God is wise', then this too is not true. I am wiser than he is! Or if I say that 'God exists', this is also not true. He is being beyond being: he is a nothingness beyond being. Therefore St Augustine says: 'The finest thing that we can say of God is to be silent concerning him from the wisdom of inner riches.' Be silent therefore, and do not chatter about God, for by chattering about him, you tell lies and commit a sin.[199]

Eckhart's fundamental point that any statement about God was certain to fall short of the reality of the divine was straightforward, but he chose to make it in a way that was likely to be at least disconcerting if not shocking to his audience. Not only did he deny the validity of conventional statements about God, but he appeared to claim superiority to God, being 'better' and 'wiser' than God, and even to challenge God's very existence. An appreciation that he was doing nothing of the kind depended on grasping the fundamental point which was at least explicitly alluded to when he began by saying that no one could speak of God and again when he referred to God's transcendence.

Eckhart challenged his audience further when, far from falling silent himself, he went beyond the negation involved when he said, for example, that 'God is not good', and added a second negation. Thus when discussing the oneness of God, he defined oneness as 'a negation of negation and a denial of denial', explaining:

> All creatures contain a negation within themselves: one creature denies that it is another. One particular angel denies that he is another. But with God there is a negation of negation: he is one and negates all else, since there is nothing outside God ... By denying something of God – if I were to deny goodness of

[198] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 196–8; Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 145–8.
[199] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 28, p. 236.

God for instance (though I can in truth deny nothing of God) – by denying something of God, I grasp something which he is not. It is precisely this which must be got rid of. God is one; he is the negation of negation.[200]

Eckhart's point was that any particular created thing was not some other created thing. But God was not like that, he was not just another distinct thing, because his being was of a different order altogether. God's being was not divisible in this way, hence his oneness and the need for the second negation. Eckhart frequently argued that there were two types of being: the being of creatures was 'being this or that' or 'distinct being', whereas the being of God was 'being simply', 'absolute being' or 'indistinct being'.[201] Here he made the point by exploiting the limitations of language to set up his sequence of negations.

In *Beati pauperes spiritu* Eckhart again made his basic point about the inadequacy of language and human conception, but he served up a sterner challenge to comprehension because he offered far less by way of explanation. Having described the state of existence from which individuals emerged when they were created, he said:

But when I emerged by free choice and received my created being, I came into the possession of a 'God' for, until creatures came into existence, God was not 'God', but was rather what he was. Then, when creatures emerged and received their created being, God was not 'God' in himself but in creatures.[202]

Later in the sermon, he made a request:

I ask God to make me free of 'God', for my essential being is above 'God' in so far as we conceive of God as the origin of creatures.[203]

He went on to observe:

And if I did not exist, then neither would God have existed as 'God'. I am the cause of God's existence as 'God'.[204]

Once again he was making a straightforward point. The human conception of God and the word 'God' were created by humans and could not remotely measure up to God as he really was. Thus, until humans were created, the conception and the word, indicated in the modern

200 *Ibid.*, sermon 17, p. 182.

201 See Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 108–9; Hollywood, 'Suffering transformed', p. 105; Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 163–5.

202 Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 22, pp. 204–5. I have added inverted commas on the first occasion that the word 'God' occurs in this passage (I came into the possession of a 'God'). Colledge and McGinn make the same decision in their translation of this sermon; Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 200.

203 Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 22, p. 207.

204 *Ibid.*, p. 208.

translation by inverted commas, did not exist. Eckhart wanted to be free of this human conception of God so that he could engage more closely with the reality of God. Had humans not existed, there would have been no human conception of and word for God; humans could therefore be described as the cause of God being thought to exist in the manner that humans conceived of him. Eckhart did not, however, spell out the key idea that renders these passages relatively easy to unravel. At first sight, or rather on first hearing, 'God was not God' must have seemed like baffling contradiction, and the request to be 'free of God' and the claim to be 'above God' must have come across as deeply shocking. It would be fascinating to know if Eckhart signalled the difference between God (as he really is) and 'God' (the human conception) by altering his voice or using gestures. The insertion of inverted commas is a modern device for indicating this distinction, and modern students discussing these passages almost invariably end up waggling the first two fingers on both hands when referring to God as conceived by humans to recreate the effect when speaking.[205] Whether or not any such performative devices were used, Eckhart posed a tough and provocative test for his audience, and whether or not they understood his ideas, they can have been left in no doubt about the shortcomings of language.

Eckhart deployed the vocabulary of nobility, however, in a straightforward and unproblematic manner. In the treatise *On the Noble Man*, he used it to direct attention to the worth of the inner man:

The other person in us is the inner man, which Scripture calls the new, the heavenly, the young, the noble man, or the friend. And this is the one which is meant when our Lord says that 'a certain nobleman went away to a distant country to gain a kingdom for himself, and returned'.[206]

He used it more precisely to refer to that part or aspect of the soul which was capable of union with God. Thus the 'light in the soul which is uncreated and uncreatable ... which apprehends God without medium, without concealment and nakedly, just as he is in himself' was just as noble as other faculties of the soul with regard to being, but 'far nobler and more elevated' with regard to function.[207] He also deployed it to describe the process of achieving detachment. When knowing was transformed into unknowing, 'our unknowing shall be ennobled and enriched with supernatural knowing'.[208] The birth of God in the soul

205 For discussion of the introduction of inverted commas in this way, see Colledge and Marler, '"Poverty of the will"', pp. 16–17.

206 Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *On the Noble Man*, p. 99.

207 *Ibid.*, sermon 7, p. 135.

208 *Ibid.*, sermon 24, p. 220.

was 'the noble birth'.[209] Although Eckhart did not follow Marguerite Porete in using noble contempt for other social orders to convey the gulf between detachment and other forms of religious practice, he made the same decision to eschew the language of learning and the university to explain the highest possible form of knowing.

As with Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*, however, Eckhart's work was controversial because of what he said about virtue, good works and religious practices. The eighth article of *In agro dominico* attributed to him and condemned the view that 'Those who are not desiring possessions, or honours, or gain, or internal devotion, or holiness, or reward or the kingdom of heaven, but who have renounced all this, even what is theirs, these people pay honour to God.'[210] Certainly there are numerous occasions when Eckhart appears to disparage conventional religious practices, for example in *Beati pauperes spiritu*, when explaining the need to abandon the will:

In the first place we say that a poor person is someone who desires nothing. Some people do not understand this point correctly. I mean those who cling to their own egos in their penances and external devotions, which such people regard as being of great importance. God have mercy on them, for they know little of the divine truth! These people are called holy because of what they are seen to do, but inside they are asses, for they do not know the real meaning of divine truth. Although such people are happy to say that a poor person is one who desires nothing, they interpret this as meaning that we must live in such a way that we never perform our own will in anything but that we should desire rather to carry out God's most precious will. These people are alright, for they mean well and that is why they deserve our praise. May God in his mercy grant them heaven! But I tell you by the divine truth that such people are not truly poor nor are they like those who are poor. They are greatly esteemed by people who know no better. But I tell you that they are asses, who understand nothing of God's truth. May they attain heaven because of their good intent, but of that poverty, of which we now wish to speak, they know nothing.[211]

Eckhart evidently regarded those who valued and carried out conventional religious practices as well-meaning and perhaps deserving of a place in heaven, but at the same time they were asses who had not grasped higher truths and who were only praised by those who were similarly uninformed. No one could hope to achieve detachment if they were preoccupied with external works. Once detachment had been achieved, however, Eckhart sometimes suggested that standard

[209] *Ibid.*, sermon 25, p. 222.
[210] *In agro dominico*, article 8; Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 78.
[211] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 22, pp. 203–4.

practices were impossible. Prayer, for example, was a problem because it necessarily involved the will:

purity in detachment does not know how to pray, because if someone prays he asks God to get something for him, or he asks God to take something away from him. But a heart in detachment asks for nothing, nor has it anything of which it would gladly be free. So it is free of all prayer, and its prayer is nothing else than for uniformity with God.[212]

Lacking any will, those who achieved detachment would no longer pray because they could not. Sometimes Eckhart accepted that such activities were still possible, but pointed to the danger involved. In one sermon he presented a dialogue between himself and a member of his audience:

Now you could say: sir, if it is necessary that we should be stripped of all things and emptied of them, outside and within, the faculties together with their activity – if all this must be removed, then it is grievous if God allows us to remain without any support ... If we thus enter a state of pure nothingness, is it not better that we should do something in order to drive away the darkness and the dereliction? Should we not pray or read or listen to a sermon or do something else that is virtuous in order to help ourselves?

No, certainly not! The very best thing you can do is to remain still for as long as possible. You cannot turn away from this state to other things without doing yourself harm, that much is sure.[213]

Here Eckhart presented pious and virtuous activities as likely to undermine detachment, recreating the self that had been destroyed in order to bring God into the soul.

There were, however, other sermons in which Eckhart's views seemed much 'safer' in terms of the church's conventional teaching. When discussing the birth of God in the soul in terms of light, he made it clear that this would not happen to someone who sinned: 'But sinners can receive nothing of this, nor are they worthy to do so, since they are filled with sin and evil, which are called "darkness".'[214] And he repeated the point later in the sermon: 'it is impossible for this birth to happen in sinners since this light cannot burn and shine in them. This birth cannot coexist with the darkness of sins.'[215] Detachment did not therefore mean freedom to commit sin. In his treatise *On Detachment*, Eckhart made it clear that he regarded detachment as superior to all other virtues: 'I find no other virtue better than a pure detachment from all things; because all other virtues have some regard for created things, but detachment is free from

[212] *On Detachment* in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 292.
[213] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 25, pp. 225–6.
[214] *Ibid.*, sermon 24, p. 216. [215] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

all created things.'[216] He did not, however, deny the existence and validity of other virtues, and indeed he stressed the importance of humility in particular, even while asserting the superiority of detachment: 'I praise detachment above all humility, and that is because, although there may be humility without detachment, there cannot be perfect detachment without perfect humility, because perfect humility proceeds from annihilation of the self.'[217] Thus detachment could not be achieved without the perfect humility that was achieved by destruction of the self. Eckhart therefore advised 'whoever longs to attain to perfect detachment, let him struggle for perfect humility, and so he will come close to the divinity'.[218] In the same treatise, Eckhart discussed prayers and good works, explaining that they did not move God: 'All the prayers and good works that man can accomplish in time move God's detachment as little as if no single prayer or good work were ever performed in time.' But this was because prayers and good works existed in time whereas God saw all things 'in his first everlasting glance', and in that glance he 'saw the smallest prayer and good work that anyone would ever perform, and he took into his regard which prayers and devotion he would or should give ear to'. Prayers and good works were not therefore 'wasted', 'for whoever does well will also be well rewarded, whoever does evil will be rewarded accordingly'.[219] Moreover, in another sermon Eckhart stated explicitly that good works could never be abandoned:

> Now some people want to maintain they have advanced so far that they are free even of good works. But I say again that this cannot be. It was after receiving the Holy Spirit that the disciples first began to practise virtues.[220]

There was apparently no reason to suppose that those who achieved detachment would undermine the pastoral work of the church.

Putting these various passages together, it is entirely possible to attribute to Eckhart a coherent view of virtue, good works and religious practices that did not run counter to contemporary orthodoxy. Prayer, penance and good works should not be ends in themselves, and preoccupation with them should not get in the way of detachment, but detachment did not mean ceasing to behave virtuously. Ordinary believers did not comprehend detachment, but that did not mean that they could not be saved.[221] Undoubtedly, however, there were occasions

[216] *On Detachment*, in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 285.
[217] *Ibid.*, p. 286. [218] *Ibid.*, p. 294. [219] *Ibid.*, pp. 288–9.
[220] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 21, p. 202.
[221] For discussion of Eckhart's views on virtue, works and religious practices, see Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 166–9, 170–2; Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 139, 173–4, 179–80.

when he spoke about conventional religious practices in ways that seemed to call their worth into question. It is significant, moreover, that *we* have to bring passages together to propose a consistent view reconstructed out of apparently contradictory statements. Eckhart offered seemingly contradictory views on a great many issues, and those who study Eckhart almost invariably find themselves trying to reconcile these views to establish a consistent underlying set of ideas.[222] Bearing in mind his tendency to expose and exploit the limitations of language and to make statements that were both difficult to comprehend and likely to shock and even mislead unless precisely understood, this raises questions about how he expected to be understood, and what response he looked for in his audience. It may be that he expected his audience to know what he had said on previous occasions. Certainly he referred frequently to earlier sermons, implying that his audience was familiar with his work:

> I have occasionally spoken of … I constantly return in my sermons to …[223]
> From time to time we have said that … But now we put it differently, going further, and say that …[224]
> But I say, as I have often said, that …[225]

Perhaps therefore he expected his audience to be able to interpret whatever he said on one occasion in the light of earlier statements, and to temper his more extreme statements accordingly. On the other hand, he was certainly aware that many who heard him might not understand what he was saying. He alluded to this possibility repeatedly, in *Beati pauperes spiritu* for example:

> I ask you to be poor enough to understand what it is that I am saying to you, for I declare by Eternal Wisdom that if you do not yourself become the same as that Wisdom of which we wish to speak, then my words will mean nothing to you … But if you do not understand, then do not worry, for I shall be speaking of a particular kind of truth which only a few good people can grasp … I am the cause of God's existence as 'God'. But it is not necessary for you to know this … Whoever does not understand these words, should not be troubled. For as long as someone is not themselves akin to this truth, they will not understand my words, since this is an unconcealed truth which has come directly from the heart of God.[226]

[222] For summaries of contradictory statements on a range of issues, see Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 115, 135–6, 196–8; Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 140, 144–8. In these works Davies and Turner have offered the most compelling accounts of fundamental consistencies in Eckhart's thought.
[223] Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, sermon 7, p. 135.
[224] *Ibid.*, sermon 22, p. 205. [225] *Ibid.*, sermon 24, p. 215.
[226] *Ibid.*, sermon 22, pp. 203–9.

According to Eckhart, his words would only be understood by those who achieved the state that he was discussing, and they would be few in number. Those who could not follow him, however, need not be concerned. He simply did not countenance the possibility that they might misunderstand and fall into some kind of error.

It has been convincingly suggested that Eckhart chose his words to stimulate a particular response rather than to convey a measured account of his thinking. According to Oliver Davies, he 'uses one device after another in order to shake his listeners free from their assumptions, in order to deliver a "metaphysical shock"',[227] and he aims 'to use language and imagery not in a descriptive manner but primarily in an expressive way in order to effect a cognitive transformation within his audience'.[228] Bernard McGinn explains how he 'often uses a form of homiletic shock therapy in which he makes outrageous statements that taken at face value are almost blasphemous in character ... The goal of this practice is the deconstruction that leads to silent union.'[229] Denys Turner remarks that he often 'seems careless of the meaning of what he says in its own right', and that 'What appears to matter to him is the meaning which what he says is capable of evoking in the minds of his listeners, as if what mattered to him was not the exactness of *his* meaning, but the exactness with which his language evokes meaning in them.'[230] Perhaps Eckhart considered his audience to be sufficiently well trained to know what was orthodox, and believed that if they tried to make his words fit with orthodox belief they would think in the way that he wanted them to think. If so, he was placing a great deal of confidence in both his audience and his own judgement of them.

Others, however, shared no such confidence, and the terms of *In agro dominico* are revealing in this regard. Eckhart was said to have 'presented many things as dogma that were designed to cloud the true faith in the hearts of many, things which he put forth especially before the uneducated crowd in his sermons and that he also admitted into his writings'.[231] Condemnation was made 'Lest articles of this sort and their contents further infect the hearts of the simple among whom they were preached'.[232] 'The uneducated crowd', 'the simple': the women to whom he preached were not recognized as learned, and they were not

[227] Davies, *Meister Eckhart*, p. 126.
[228] *Ibid.*, p. 196. See also his perceptive comments at pp. 5, 199–201.
[229] McGinn, *Harvest of Mysticism*, p. 142; see also pp. 111, 122.
[230] Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 149.
[231] *In agro dominico*, in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, p. 77.
[232] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

believed to live in an appropriate institutional setting. The bull further stated that

> we have found the first fifteen articles in question as well as the two final ones to contain the error or stain of heresy as much from *the tenor of their words* as from the sequence of their thoughts. The other eleven ... we have found quite *evil-sounding* and very rash and suspect of heresy, though with many explanations and additions they might take on or possess a Catholic meaning.[233]

Quite simply, Eckhart sounded heretical.[234] Even when his words could be given an orthodox interpretation, he struck the wrong note. He deployed his learning and his status irresponsibly.

There was, however, a paradox in Eckhart's own construction of self. He had called for the destruction of the self, insisted that one must know nothing, and drawn attention to the inadequacies of language. But he himself seemed to know everything, speaking always with the authority of the master. Moreover, unlike Marguerite Porete, who fell silent and refused to defend herself, Eckhart defended himself with vigour and a patent sense of outrage. He was dead by the time *In agro dominico* was issued, but he had already stated his case in terms that emphasized his own standing. He was famous, able to claim 'the esteem of the brethren of the whole order and men and women of the entire kingdom and of every nation'. He had produced a vast corpus of writings, which of course his accusers could not understand: 'I am surprised that they do not bring up more objections against what is written in my different works, for it is well known that I have written a hundred things and more that their ignorance neither understands nor grasps.' Moreover, he comforted himself that the masters of theology at Paris had been required to examine the works of Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, and that Aquinas in particular had often been accused of error and heresy, only to be 'given approval, both at Paris and also by the Supreme Pontiff and the Roman curia'. He could state curtly to his accusers 'I am not held to respond to you or to anyone except the Pope and the University of Paris', although from his 'own generosity' he 'still wanted to write down and present these things to you so that I do not seem to be avoiding what has been falsely brought against me'.[235] When

[233] *Ibid.* The italics are mine.
[234] It must be noted, however, that 'evil-sounding and very rash and suspect of heresy' was 'a traditional formula'; see B. McGinn, '"Evil-sounding, rash, and suspect of heresy": tensions between mysticism and magisterium in the history of the church', *The Catholic Historical Review* 90 (2004): 193–212 at 193.
[235] Response to the List of Forty-Nine Articles, in Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons*, pp. 71–4.

it came to it, he had been a master of theology at the University of Paris and no one should forget it.

Eckhart was oblivious to the challenge that he had posed to the very authority on which he fell back. While not denigrating reason like Jean de Meun and Marguerite Porete, he implied its relatively low status in the hierarchy of knowledge by directing attention to the kind of knowing that could not be taught in schools and universities because it was a vastly superior unknowing. He evidently expected, moreover, to find it outside the university and amongst women, and he used the language of nobility to express its higher status. Similarly, he challenged the kind of intellectual work performed in the university by exposing the inability of language to convey meaning about the highest truths. Moreover, he did so in the vernacular, frequently to a female audience, in ways that were meant to be hard to follow. He expected only a few to understand because he thought that only those who had achieved detachment could understand. He was unperturbed that most would therefore be left struggling with statements that sometimes seemed shocking in terms of the religious conventions of his day. Like Marguerite, he also talked about the destruction of the will and the self, focusing on that part of the soul where God might be found: a something, a light, a spark, the ground. In so doing he called into question the value of virtue, good works and conventional religious practices. While an overview of his work shows that he did not intend to reject any of these, he often spoke witheringly about conventional piety, suggesting that detachment made it either impossible or dangerous. He thus undermined confidence in the kind of knowing cultivated in the university, and challenged the pastoral strategies by which that knowledge was meant to take effect outside the university.

Conclusion

In the late thirteenth century and more especially the early fourteenth century, it is possible to detect an anti-intellectual challenge to the university and in particular to its theologians. It was provided by highly learned and intellectually sophisticated women and men who were active both inside and outside the university itself, but whose worlds were not unconnected with the university and its theologians. The idea that there was a hierarchy of knowledge was treated in ways that led to the disparagement or rejection of reason and to the insistence that language could not be trusted to convey definite meaning, making truth difficult if not impossible to grasp and communicate. Jean de Meun refused to accept a hierarchy that would generate an ordered relationship between

different forms of knowledge, and although Reason was given a voice, other voices repeatedly denigrated what it had to offer, resulting in a cumulative rejection. Marguerite Porete and Eckhart operated with very strong hierarchies of knowledge, but focused on forms of knowing, or rather unknowing, at the top of the hierarchy that could not be taught in a university and indeed required abandonment of what was taught there. Eckhart's emphasis on knowing nothing simply implied the low status of reason, but Marguerite expressed unbridled contempt for everything below annihilation, repeatedly disparaging reason and the kind of understanding that it purported to give. Jean de Meun insisted upon the instability of meaning, holding contradictory ideas constantly in play, declining to use a clear authorial voice to assert any kind of priority, allowing allegorical figures to subvert not only each other but themselves, and always pointing to false signs and strategies of deception. Marguerite and Eckhart both stressed the inadequacy of language when it came to talking about God. Marguerite used paradox and contradiction to make the point, ensuring that meaning was hard to establish, and ultimately falling silent, in life as well as in her text. Eckhart subverted conventional statements about God in provocative fashion, deployed a multitude of metaphors, and turned to negation as a way of exploiting the weakness of language to get beyond words. The value of language and reason, the basic tools used in the university, were therefore called into question.

There was also a challenge to the idea that it was necessary to live virtuously to know correctly, and that virtuous living should be guaranteed by institutional setting. This was the fundamental approach that had been taken from monastic thinking and incorporated into the public discourse justifying the existence of the University of Paris. Now the most radical ideas, calling the power of reason and language into question, were expressed in vernacular languages for audiences outside the university, wholly or partly made up of the laity, and frequently female. Jean de Meun operated outside or on the margins of the university, but with highly partisan insider knowledge derived from the faculty of arts, and in a literary form that implied a lay readership. Marguerite was a woman with no known institutional base, an atypical beguine, so on the margins of a group that was already marginal in the eyes of many, expressly claiming to have written a book that would be beyond most theologians. Eckhart worked with much stronger institutional foundations, invoking the authority of a master of theology at Paris when attacked, and holding offices in the Dominican order that gave him pastoral responsibility for women. Evidently, however, he expected to find the higher forms of unknowing outside the university and amongst

women. The boundaries of the university and its function as institutional guarantor of an appropriate context for correct knowing were being ignored both by a master of theology and by those who were outsiders in varying degrees. For some at least, the ways of knowing fostered by the university were losing their status, and the university's contextual role was being undermined.

The pastoral function of the university was also called into question by the same anti-intellectual intellectuals who challenged the university's worth as a producer of knowledge. The public discourse underpinning the authority and standing of the university had stressed the way it turned men into preachers. The theologians had further justified their status in terms of generating knowledge that would be communicated beyond the schools. Now doubt was cast on the pastoral mechanisms of the church that the Paris theologians reckoned to inform. Jean de Meun attacked the friars, mocked theologians, dressed Genius as a bishop to preach in favour of procreative sex, and transformed the lover into a pilgrim just before he finally plucks the rose. He played with ideas about sex and marriage that had been developed by masters of theology, exploiting their lack of consensus about sexual pleasure, sometimes seeming to echo their views, but always omitting a key element, and invariably ending up with the trenchant expression of an idea that ran counter to the pastoral teaching they helped to develop. For Marguerite, the direct relationship between the annihilated soul and God left no role for the church as mediary. Moreover, she expressed no respect for Holy Church the Little, and made it clear that the church would not be able to identify annihilated souls and so would not be able to govern them. She also had the annihilated soul take leave of the virtues and good works, and display indifference to basic religious practices. She briefly acknowledged that these fundamental components of the church's teaching were important if the vast majority of people were to be saved, and she did not imagine that the annihilated soul would behave sinfully, but this was not her real concern. Moreover, she made her points provocatively, using the issues of good works and religious practices chiefly to illuminate her points about the nature of annihilation, thus seeming to cast doubt on the worth of the church's pastoral teaching. While an overview of Eckhart's work might suggest that his views about good works and basic religious practices were essentially conventional, he made his point about the failings of language by subverting customary praise of God; and when explaining the need for abandonment of the will, he appeared to disparage religious practices, suggesting that those who achieved detachment could not or should not perform them.

These anti-intellectual intellectuals showed remarkably little concern about being misunderstood, and little inclination to take responsibility for the wider reception of their works. If Jean de Meun could be pinned down to any definite message, it would be to believe nothing; but the matter was more serious in the cases of Marguerite Porete and Eckhart because they claimed to offer a religious message. According to Marguerite, only annihilated souls – who could be anyone, without regard to social class or education – would understand her. Those who were not and would never be annihilated simply would not grasp her meaning, and she expressed no more than passing concern about how they might be misled. Eckhart offered contradictory statements and made his points in disconcerting ways that were open to misinterpretation unless the basic underlying idea was grasped in full, an idea he did not always opt to spell out. He was fully aware that many would not understand him, expecting only those few who had achieved detachment to see what he meant. While seeking to stimulate particular responses from part of his audience, he showed no concern that those who failed to understand might misunderstand and be led into error. The vision of general pastoral responsibility previously set out by the masters of theology was no longer being respected.

The identity of the university was further challenged by the emphasis that was being placed on nobility in connection with knowing. Two long-standing traditions were brought into play here. Debates about whether noble status should stem from birth or the virtue of the individual could be found in classical texts.[236] Jean de Meun's emphasis on virtue as the basis of noble status therefore had a long history, but he gave it a much newer twist when he claimed noble status for the learned clerk. Another tradition deployed the language of nobility in the context of union between God and the soul.[237] Since love was often the dominant motif describing this union, and this invited the use of courtly imagery, nobility was often attributed to the soul that experienced union with God. With Marguerite and Eckhart, however, this was strongly linked with ideas about abandoning knowledge and reason, so that nobility reinforced the notion that there were superior forms of knowing, or unknowing, that were not to be found in the university. Once the rhetoric of nobility had been deployed both to express the idea that learning should be properly recognized and to refer to the highest forms of knowing, it is not surprising that university men appropriated it for

[236] See Murray, *Reason and Society*, pp. 271–4.

[237] See Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation*, pp. 9–16, 20–5, 102–4.

themselves, using it to demand actual privileges. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, those who held university degrees came to enjoy noble privileges, asserting their worth by appealing to social categories that originated outside the university.[238]

Some historians of the intellectual culture of the fourteenth century have stressed continuity from the thirteenth century, but most have identified change.[239] Whereas that change used to be characterized in terms of failure and decline, recent work has preferred to emphasize renewal or to avoid that kind of judgement altogether.[240] It has been clearly demonstrated that there were significant changes in the relationship between the masters of theology at Paris and the king of France, with the king consulting the theologians and seeking to use their authority to legitimize his policy.[241] Meanwhile, in the 1320s Pope John XXII summoned theologians to the papal court at Avignon where he set up a central theological school that relieved him of the need to consult theologians based in Paris.[242] Subsequently, the international standing of the university and the faculty of theology was greatly reduced by the Hundred Years War between England and France, which virtually removed English masters and students from the university and made travel difficult for everyone, and by the great Schism, which reduced numbers coming from Germany, Italy and Scandinavia.[243] Increasingly, the university

[238] See J. Verger, *Men of Learning in Europe at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. L. Neal and S. Rendall (Notre Dame, IN, 2000), esp. pp. 31, 69–70, 150–63. On fourteenth- and fifteenth-century students seeking to identify with the aristocracy by copying their behaviour and dress, see R. M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 98–100.

[239] The case for continuity is most compellingly made by Verger, *Men of Learning*, pp. 49–56.

[240] See the judicious comments of D. Luscombe, *Medieval Thought* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 133–40.

[241] W. J. Courtenay, 'The Parisian faculty of theology in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries', in J. A. Aertsen, K. Emery and A. Speer (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277. Philosophie und Theologie en der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte / After the Condemnation of 1277. Philosophy and Theology at the University of Paris in the Last Quarter of the Thirteenth Century. Studies and Texts*, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28 (Berlin, 2001), pp. 235–47; W. J. Courtenay, 'Learned opinion and royal justice: the role of Paris masters of theology during the reign of Philip the Fair', in R. M. Karras, J. Kaye and E. A. Matter (eds.), *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 149–63. See also I. P. Wei, 'The masters of theology at the university of Paris in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries: an authority beyond the schools', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993): 37–63.

[242] R. W. Southern, 'The changing role of universities in medieval Europe', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 60 (1987): 133–46.

[243] W. J. Courtenay, *Parisian Scholars in the Early Fourteenth Century: A Social Portrait* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 2, 108.

and its theologians maintained their high standing through association with the French monarchy and its political institutions.[244] The dominant intellectual trends are much harder to identify. Historians used to put the emphasis on scepticism about what it was possible to know and doubt about the value of reason in understanding God, as they sought to explain what they perceived as the collapse of great philosophical and theological systems constructed in the thirteenth century.[245] Recent scholarship presents a different picture, demonstrating that sceptical arguments were used to help work out conceptions of knowledge and to refine rather than undermine claims to know truth.[246] Specialist studies, however, offer no clear overall picture, not least because the study of Parisian theologians in the fourteenth century remains patchy, and much work has still to be done.[247] As research continues and historians seek to define and explain the changes that were taking place, new questions need to be asked, and it is important to bear in mind the intellectually sophisticated anti-intellectual challenge that came from women as well as men, from outside the university as well as inside, and in vernacular languages. At the very least the theologians were operating in a new context: they no longer enjoyed a monopoly of high-order theological thinking. More than that, the status of the Paris theologians had rested on their claim to have certain knowledge based partly on the use of reason and language, and partly on virtuous living ensured by an institution that regulated the lives of its members. Their status also depended on their fulfilment of a pastoral function, training men to be preachers, setting out a general framework within which souls could be saved, providing specific advice on fundamental aspects of ordinary life, and fully accepting their responsibility for the wider reception of their teaching. All of this was now called into question. Traditionally, the anti-intellectual intellectuals have been treated separately from the Parisian theologians, and often by different scholars, Jean de Meun as

[244] Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, pp. 138–42, 148–50; S. Lusignan, *'Vérité garde le roy': la construction d'une identité universitaire en France (XIIIe-XVe siècle)* (Paris, 1999).

[245] This point is made by almost all outline intellectual histories of the period. See, for example, G. Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Institutional and Intellectual History* (New York, 1968), pp. 240–55; Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, pp. 130–2, 135–8; Luscombe, *Medieval Thought*, pp. 133–58.

[246] See, for example, D. Perler, 'Skepticism', in R. Pasnau (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2010), vol. 1, pp. 384–96.

[247] See the comments of J. Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350)* (London, 1987, repr. 1996), p. 188; C. Schabel, *Theology at Paris, 1316–1345: Peter Auriol and the Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 4, 9.

a literary figure, and Marguerite and Eckhart as 'mystics'. They were dealing with many of the same themes and ideas as the theologians, however, and their worlds were not unconnected. In seeking to understand how the masters of theology at Paris sustained their authority in a changing world, future research must consider the extent to which they responded to the challenge posed by anti-intellectual intellectuals. By thus rethinking the boundaries that frame our own scholarship, we may achieve a better understanding of the social and intellectual pressures that shaped fourteenth-century intellectual culture, and the fourteenth century will perhaps emerge as a period of reinvention.

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