Selected Bibliography on Abelard’s Logic and Ontology.
First Part A - L

For Abelard’s contributions to the theories of supposition and mental language see: Medieval Theories of Supposition (Reference) and Mental Language.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

   Actes du Colloque de Neuchâtel 16-17 novembre 1979. 

   Special Issue edited by Jeffrey E. Brower. 
   Contents: Jeffrey E. Brower: Editor's Introduction 162; Peter King: Abelard on Mental Language 169; Ian Wilks: Abelard on Context and Signification 189; Andrew Arlig: Abelard’s Assault on Everyday Objects 209; John Marenbon: Abelard’s Changing Thoughts on Sameness and Difference in Logic and Theology 229; Jeffrey Hause: Abelard on Degrees of Sinfulness 251; Sean Eisen Murphy: "The Law was Given for the Sake of Life": Peter Abelard on the Law of Moses 271; A.L. Griffioen: "In Accordance with the Law": Reconciling Divine and Civil Law in Abelard 307; Margaret Cameron: Abelard (and Heloise?) on Intention 323-338.

   See Chapter 4, Abelard's Mereology and Its Role in Metaphysics pp. 141-242. 
   "The study of parts and wholes, or mereology, occupies two of the best philosophical minds of twelfth-century Europe, Abelard and Pseudo-Joscelin. But the contributions of Abelard and Pseudo-Joscelin cannot be adequately assessed until we come to terms with the mereological doctrines of the sixth century philosopher Boethius. Apart from providing the general mereological background for the period, Boethius influences Abelard and Pseudo-Joscelin in two crucial respects. First, Boethius all but omits mention of the classical Aristotelian concept of form. Second, Boethius repeatedly highlights a rule which says that if a part is removed, the whole is removed as well. Abelard makes many improvements upon Boethius. His theory of static identity accounts for the relations of sameness and difference that hold between a thing and its part. His theory of identity also provides a solution to the problem of material constitution. With respect to the problem of persistence, Abelard assimilates Boethius' rule and proposes that the loss of any part entails the annihilation of the whole. More precisely, Abelard thinks that the matter of things suffers annihilation upon the gain or loss of even one part. He also holds that many structured wholes, namely artifacts, are strictly dependent upon their parts. Yet Abelard insists that human beings survive a variety of mereological changes. Abelard is silent about objects which are neither artifacts nor persons. I argue that Abelard has the theoretical resources to provide an account of the persistence of these types of object, so long as some forms are ontologically robust. Pseudo-Joscelin rejects the thesis that the removal of any part entails the destruction of the whole. The annihilation of a whole follows only from the removal of essential parts. Pseudo-Joscelin employs two basic principles in his theory of persistence. First, forms and the functions encoded in them play a primary role in identity and persistence. He also makes use of a genetic criterion. Pseudo-Joscelin expands both principles and employs them when he vigorously defends the thesis that a universal is a concrete whole composed of particulars from Abelard’s criticisms."

   "Abelard repeatedly claims that no thing can survive the gain or loss of parts. I outline
Abelard's reasons for holding this controversial position. First, a change of parts compromises the matter of the object. Secondly, a change in matter compromises the form of the object. Given that both elements of an object are compromised by any gain or loss of a part, the object itself is compromised by any such change. An object that appears to survive change is really a series of related, but non-identical, objects. I argue that, for Abelard, this series of objects is not itself an object. Finally, I examine an apparent exception to Abelard's claim that no thing can survive a gain or loss of parts, and I show that this specific case does not undermine his general thesis.


"The distinction between modalities de re and de dicto Abaelard discusses in his Glossae super Peri hermeneias (1) presents itself as a topic of traditional predication theory. The two varieties of alethic modality are bound to opposite forms of predication. In spite of their uniform linguistic appearance their basic structures are different. Modal propositions de dicto are semantically, not just grammatically, impersonal whereas modal propositions de re are truly personal constructions.(2) Nevertheless Abaelard explains the meaning, scope and purpose of according modal operators in so uniform a manner that he can set forth rules of inference between modal propositions de re and their logical correspondents de dicto. A systematic presentation of Abaelard's theory pertains to all constitutive features of predication. The grammatical, but even more so the semantical, impersonality or personality of a categorical proposition, its quality and if appropriate its quantity, and finally its temporality and existential presupposition -- each of these features predetermines the manner in which modalities de re or de dicto contribute to a proposition's meaning and validity. These basic aspects of Abaelard's account of predication do not obstruct his intuitive conception of alethic modality as determining either de re or de dicto a predicate's inherence or remotion.(3)"


"The purely 'philosophical' importance of logical Abelardian research has been emphasized by Mario Dal Pra in his introduction to the edition of the Glossae Letterali. In this volume it seems important in my eyes to illustrate not only the interest of Abelardian dialectic techniques (which are at times penetrated by positions which are still realistic), but also, and above all, the importance of his total attitude towards the 'scientia scientiarum', stated in advance by a freer and braver mentality that is later to use this instrument for its rigorous definition of philosophical research. When studying Abelardian dialectic I have preferred to follow the line of development of his inquiry, from meaning to syllogistic calculation. This line does not, however,
coincide perfectly with the expositive progress of the various commentaries, from the
Isagoge to the Boetian texts; the trail has thus been marked out for me by some of the
Palatine Master's statements rather than by the order of the comments.
The perspective of this research is, generally speaking, given from the viewpoint of
contemporary formal logic, a viewpoint that is nevertheless implicit, even, I think, if it
is at work in inquiry. In fact, in an attempt to have a clearer picture of the historical
importance of the author and his meaning in a dialogue which is mediaeval, I have
tried, as far as possible, to keep the language constantly in the tone of those times, and
I have tried to avoid certain equations - unprecise and sterile in my opinion - between
Abelardian logical formulae and contemporary logical formulae. I hope that what will
be of interest from a modern viewpoint is Abelard's total attitude." (Premise, p. V).

Second revised and updated edition 1988; transited in English as The Logic of Abelard.
Filosofia no. 34:429-438.
La Primera Parte De La Lógica 'Ingredientibus'." Patristica et Mediaevalia no. 7:49-64.
"This paper analyzes the first part of the "Logica ingredientibus" of Peter Abelard. First
the author intends to show the triple structure of his philosophical method (exposition, critique, and resolution). Secondly he expounds the critical part of this structure.
Thirdly an attempt is made to outline the antirealists arguments of Abelard."
La Primera Parte De La Lógica 'Ingredientibus' (1º Part)." Patristica et Mediaevalia
no. 8:39-60.
La Primera Parte De La Logica 'Ingredientibus' (2º Part)." Patristica et Mediaevalia
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Pierre Abélard. Colloque International De Nantes, edited by Jolivet, Jean and Habrias,
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Magnus). University of Iowa.
"In what follows I focus on the work of Peter Abelard (1079-1142), an influential
medieval logician who developed his theory of relations in the course of commenting on
Categories 7.(4) Like other Aristotelians, Abelard accepts the view that relations are
reducible to the monadic properties of related things. On his theory, however, the
relation between Simmias and Socrates is not to be explained by a set of peculiar
monadic properties--say, being-taller-than-Socrates and being-shorter-than-Simmias.
Rather it is to be explained by a pair of ordinary heights--say, being-six-feet-tall in
the case of Simmias and being-five-feet-ten in the case of Socrates. Indeed, according to
Abelard, the relation between Simmias and Socrates is nothing over and above the
Although Abelard commits himself to a form of reductionism about relations, we shall see that his theory is perfectly compatible with the advances made by twentieth-century logicians. Abelard is careful to distinguish questions about ontology from questions about logic, and to commit himself to reducing relations only at the level of ontology. Thus, he argues that Simmias’s being taller than Socrates is nothing but Simmias, Socrates, and their respective heights. Nonetheless, he denies that relational statements of the form "Simmias is taller than Socrates" can be reduced to complex non-relational statements of the form "Simmias is six-feet-tall and Socrates is five-feet-ten."

The rest of the paper is divided into three parts. As will emerge, there is an important distinction to be drawn between Abelard’s theory of relations and his account of relatives. In the first part of the paper (sections I-II), I present and explain the account of relatives. Here I focus on one of Abelard’s most important logical works, his Logica 'ingredientibus,' but since the relevant portion of this work follows the subject matter and arrangement of Categories 7, I begin with a brief sketch of Aristotle’s text. In the second part of the paper (sections III-V), I indicate what Abelard’s account of relatives tells us about his own theory of relations. Although, this requires some reconstruction on my part, it is possible to determine with some accuracy to what sort of theory he committed himself. In the third and final part of the paper (sections VI-VII), I turn to the defense of Abelard’s theory. My purpose in this last part is to begin the project of rehabilitating a much denigrated tradition in the history of philosophy."


Introductory Conference: Peter Abelard and the Concept of Subjectivity

L. Engels: Abélard ecrivain
T. Gregory: Abélard et Platon
D. E. Luscombe: The Ethics of Abelard: Some Further Considerations
M. Kurdzialek: Beurteilung der Philosophie im "Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaem et Christianum" 85
R. Thomas: Die meditative Dialektik im "Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaem et Christianum" 99
R. Peppermüller: Exegetische Traditionen and theologische Neuansätze in Abaelards Kommentar zum Römerbrief 116
M. T. Beonio-Brocchieri Fumagalli: La relation entre logique, physique et théologie 153
J. Jolivet: Comparaison des théories du langage chez Abelard et chez les Nominalistes du XIVe siècle 163
Index Auctorum 179-181.


"The paper deals with the section of Peter Abaelard’s Glossae super Porphyrium concerning the three questions about the universals. The pars destruens, in which Abaelard criticizes the realistic doctrines of William of Champeaux, does not have a merely negative function, but it tries to reach the starting-point of Abaelard’s own position, namely, that things differ not only in their forms or accidents, but also in their matters or essences. When he speaks of the image of the universal term, he does not explain the process of the elaboration of the universal concept starting from the thing, but he rather refers to the intellectual signification of terms, in so far as they 'produce intellecctions'. This default could be explained because of the fact that, in Abaelard’s view, the human intelligence hardly ever or never grasps the essences of things."


On the logic see in particular Part I: Scientia - 'Knowledge' pp. 24-118.

'The Structure of This Book. This book discusses Abelard’s roles one by one in successive chapters (Literate', 'Master', 'Logician', and so on) in order to build up a composite portrait of him. The sequence of chapters accords very roughly with the chronology of Abelard’s life: from his precocious success in the schools (chapters 3-5), through his affair with Heloise (chapters 8-9), to his controversial career as a monk and theologian (chapters 11-13). Two chapters are devoted to his affair with Heloise because this was the turning point of his life, even though the events it comprised were concentrated in not much more than a single year (1117 or 1118). The concluding chapter (14), entitled 'Himself', centres on the Delphic subtitle he chose for his book on ethics: 'Know Thyself'.

Overarching the fourteen chapters are the three parts, with their Latin titles, into which the book is divided: Scientia ('knowledge' or 'science'), Experimentum ('experience' or 'experiment') and Religio ('religion' or 'monasticism'). These three parts characterize Abelard’s successive approaches to life and they function at the same time as an introduction to medieval culture in the period of the twelfth-century Renaissance. In Part I, Abelard expounds the 'science' which the Middle Ages had inherited from classical antiquity. In his native Loire valley he had begun his road to knowledge as a 'Literate' (chapter 3), that is, as a literatus and Latinist; then in Paris he had been acknowledged as a 'Master' (chapter 4) of students. He 'who alone knew whatever was known' was a 'master' also in the sense of magus. His wisdom and magic comprehended all the knowledge of the ancient Greeks in philosophy and logic (chapter 5), the queen of the sciences.

Contrasting with this theoretical and scholastic knowledge is Experimentum (Part II): learning not from books, but from experiencing life in the raw. Theory and fact,
reflection and action, contrast - and often conflict - in Abelard's life, as they do in medieval culture as a whole. In his book on ethics, he had argued that actions in themselves are indifferent; only the intention of the actor makes them right or wrong. Abelard 'experimented' with sex and violence. He compared himself to a knight (chapter 7), conducting feuds and mock battles in the schools, and then suddenly he found himself up against Fulbert and Heloise's other kinsmen in a real feud. In castrating Abelard, they took no account of his good intentions, but only of his action in putting Heloise into a convent. Because the Church put such value on celibacy, Abelard's castration had the peculiar effect of converting him to 'religion' (Part III), in the sense that it made him become a monk. Such was the attraction of monasticism in the twelfth century that the adjective *religiosus* (chapter 10) was synonymous with 'monastic', as if there was no religion outside the cloister. Abelard made repeated efforts to be a good monk (chapter 1), but he never could reconcile the exclusiveness of monasticism with his broad vision of theology (chapter 12), in which good pagans worshipped the true God and acknowledged the Trinity. He was not only a failed 'religious', St Bernard taunted, he was a blasphemer and a heretic (chapter 13).

(...)  
Abelard's writings fill a whole volume (no. 178) of Migne's *Patrologiae: Series Latina* comprising about 800,000 words. His *Theologia* in its various versions (Abelard kept revising it over the decades 1120-40) contains more than 200,000 words; *Sic et Non* has 130,000, his sermons 115,000, the commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans 90,000; for Heloise he wrote another 70,000 words. Migne's volume does not include Abelard's writings on logic: one big book, *Dialectica*, survives (though it is not complete) in addition to other commentaries and lectures. It is certain that some works have been lost, like the commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel which Abelard says he wrote in Paris and the love songs which he reminded Heloise were still being sung in the 1130s. As his surviving writings amount to about 1 million words, his total output must have considerably exceeded that." (pp. 19-22).

"This paper supports the claim that what "nominalism" meant to twelfth-century thinkers was the doctrine of the univocal signification of nouns and verbs, with their oblique or tensed forms conveying consignification of the things or actions they signify in the nominative case or present tense, respectively. The paper shows that both Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard called upon this doctrine in their argument over whether God can do better than He does, indicating that nominalism so defined has a perceived utility for exponents of differing logical and theological persuasions at the time."
"With respect to the Lombard's contribution to the history of nominalism in the twelfth century, then, we may offer three conclusions. First, from our consideration of Abelard's case, it is clear that the *opinio Nominalium* could be, and was, yoked to a post-Aristotelian kind of logic. From our consideration of the Lombard's case, it is equally clear that the *opinio Nominalium* could just as easily be yoked to a mode of reasoning deemed capable of yielding cogent ontological conclusions. In this respect, the fact that a twelfth-century thinker espouses the *opinio Nominalium* does not mean that he is automatically or necessarily required to embrace one rather than the other of these different conceptions of logic. Second, it was not just the fact that the Lombard was a theologian but his particular agenda as a theologian who sought to affirm God's omnipotence and God's essence as the transcendent metaphysical reality that accounts for both his borrowings from Abelard and his more fundamental hostility to Abelard in this area. And, finally, thanks to the rapid and enduring success of the Lombard's *Sentences* as a textbook, he was able to place both his position on divine transcendence, the distinction between God's absolute and ordained power, and the *opinio Nominalium* with which he bolstered these teachings squarely before the eyes of his scholastic contemporaries and successors." (pp. 155-156.)


"Let me conclude with two brief general addenda. First, I have tried to outline the main
development of Abelard's logic and the one most dependent upon Boethius. What we
have seen may be summarized by saying that, where Boethius closely connects,
sometimes even identifies, intellections, universals and propositions with 'res' or
beings, Abelard shifts all these relationships to a new context and then denies them all:
intellections, universals and propositions are not 'res' as physical things. To repeat a
phrase; he desubstantializes them all.

But Abelard never stops thinking. Sometimes his conclusions are more new questions
than new answers, and his second treatment of a problem is sometimes very different
from his first. Some scholars have described the last stage of his thought as a 'return to
Platonism'; but I think he is more creative and original. He has changed Boethius' res
into 'physical things,' and he has denied that intellections or meanings were 'physical
things' and turned them into 'nothings.' But there are hints, and there is no time to
analyze them here, that at the end he began to move to another new solution in which
meanings from having been nothings turn into the ultimate realities. If I had to suggest
parallels to his last stage, Petrarch, Lorenzo Valla and Nicholas of Cusa come to mind.
So if I have tried to describe Abelard's transformation of Boethius, what was left, and I
don't believe it was ever completed, might be called Abelard's transformation of
Abelard.

Second, while Abelard's writings had no wide dispersion and while he was not followed
by any school or even by very many pupils, I believe his diffuse influence was greater
than one might expect. The reorientations of thought one finds in his logic and
elsewhere often spread more widely in his own time than did his specific ideas; they
were not destroyed by the reception of Aristotle and in some ways provided a context
within which Aristotle was received. So in concluding I cannot resist noting that, while
I have characterized what happened as a transformation of Boethius, let us not in this
group forget that it was a transformation of Boethius."

Filosofia no. 34:439-451.
32. Dambksa, Izydora. 1977. "La Sémiotique Des Dictiones Indefinitae Dans La Dialectique
Sono esaminate tutte le citazioni dirette (pp. 335-357) ed indirette (pp. 357-366) di
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34. Decorte, Jos. 1999. "'Sed Quoniam Platonis Scripta Nondum Cognovit Latinitas
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Contains in Appendix the edition of Abelard's Super Topica glossae (pp. 62-80).
75:527-538.
"In the 'Logica ingredientibus" Abailard attacks the theory according to which
universals are collections of individuals. I argue that Abailard's principal objection to
this 'collective realism', viz, that it conflates universals with integral wholes, is actually
quite strong, though it is generally overlooked by recent commentators. For implicit in
this objection is the claim that the collective realist cannot provide a satisfactory
account of predication. The reason for this is that integral wholes are not uniquely
decomposable. In support of my thesis I first explicate the medieval distinction
between integral and subjective parts and then discuss its application to collective
realism."


"The linguistic theory of Abelard is centred around the correlation or correspondence between the "word" and the "thing" or the *signifiant* and the *signifié* as we would have them today. According to Abelard, if a word or a sound signifies, it is because something is added to its physical being, *essentia*; this something is the significative function, *officium significandi*. The sound, just like the thing that it represents in a give language, remains the same from one community of speakers to another, it belongs to the sphere of things, which is natural; the significance, on the other hand, changes due to the diversity of languages, it depends upon institution, upon a human convention, *positio hominum, voluntas hominum*. *(1)* We have already the distinction between the sphere of significance and the sphere of things. The sound or the physically pronounced utterance is of the order of nature while significance is created when "something" is added to its being, and, this "something" is due to human intervention in a human, social institution. For Abelard, words give birth to or "generate" intellection which then correspond to things. Thus, argues Abelard, there is a double series of correspondence between words and intellections, and between intellections and things, and consequently, between words and things. These are three distinct but related spheres. *(2)*" *(pp. 4-5).*

*(1)* Glossae super Peri Ermenias, 320, 12, 27, ed. B. Geyer, Munster i.w. 1919-23.

*(2)* Glossae super Prophyrium III, 524, 3-10, ed. B. Geyer, Munster, i.w. 1919-23.


"In a fairly opaque passage in his commentary on Aristotle's Categories Peter Abelard denies both directions of a biconditional sentence very much like a Tarski biconditional: "A man exists" is true iff a man exists. "A man exists" is taken to be a sentence token and the right hand element is taken to be the existence of a man. Neither Abelard's argument nor his reason for making the argument is clear. It at first appears that Abelard may be claiming that each of the corresponding conditionals is false. Such a claim could amount to a rejection of the correspondence theory of truth and would naturally have serious repercussions for the study of Abelard's logic. In this paper I argue that Abelard does not deny the truth of the biconditional only its necessity. Abelard makes this argument in response to Boethius and certain twelfth-century masters (I suggest Thierry of Chartres), who argue that there is a logically necessary connection between words and things, and hence between sentence tokens and what is the case in the world. Abelard is not expressing any serious reservations about the correspondence theory of truth. He is demonstrating the logical importance of the conventionality of language. Arguing against authorities, and twelfth-century peers, he shows that there is no logically necessary connection between words and things, hence the Tarski biconditional is not necessarily true."


"Imagination and Cognition of Insensibles in Peter Abelard." In *Intellect Et Imagination Dans La Philosophie Médiévale / Intelect and Imagination in Medieval Philosophy / Intelecto E Imaginação Na Filosofia Medieval / Actes Du Xie"


1.1. For Boethius and the medievals, signification is primarily linked with definition and understanding (intellectus). Abelard maintains these links as also does Aquinas, for example.

1.2. Definition canonically so-called is of nominal terms and is effectuated by means of genus, species, and differentia, at least where substance-names are concerned. Paronyms, or denominative names, involve incompletences which both Anselm of Canterbury and Abelard characterise most competently according to frameworks other than the strictly canonical. Non-canonical characterisations in general were said to be descriptions. The process of definition stricto sensu would accordingly comprise or entail sentences such as 'Man is a species', 'Animal is a genus', and so on. It was in his commentary on Aristotle's Categoriae that Boethius noted how such sentences embodied the threat of fallacious arguments such as the following: 'Man is a species; but Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is a species'. One solution, he suggested, would be to reconstrue the 'species' of 'Man is a species' as one of the names of names (nominum nomina), the named name being in his case 'man'. Thus the middle teen of the inference becomes ambiguous, and the illation fails. At the same time, we witness the foundation of the description 'nominalism' upon this intra-linguistic analysis of propositions such as the one now in question, which superficially concern the 'universal' man, and so forth. (Ockham and Hobbes are two thinkers often characterised as nominalists, and who quite consciously and overtly preserve this nominum nomina terminology, in the same sort of context).

1.3. But although definition in the strict medieval sense thus appears to be of isolated terms, taken out of context, in practice contextual presuppositions did intervene, and this in various ways. It became common to work on the significatio of whole propositions, thus directing attention to the sense or significatio of the whole within which the defined terms were embedded. The propositions, in their turn, were taken to occur within at least three generally specifiable non-exclusive anticipated contexts, namely either that of the theoretical (or 'quidditative'), wherein definitional propositions are basic, or within that of the syllogistic (largely, the four canonical A, E, I, and O forms) or within that of usus loquendi, the context of usage, whence the classical grammarians took their starting point, and which was recognised by medieval investigators of significatio as an area distinguishable (because of its contingent irregularities) from that of special technical usages. This latter distinction is already highly marked in the work of St. Anselm (1033 - 1109). These possible varieties of presupposed context will be taken account of in my own remarks, and attention called to them when the occasion arises." pp. 69-70 (notes omitted).


Although Peter Abelard was the most distinguished teacher of logic of his time, a logic understood to be the science of argumentative discourse, he was not destined to found a new philosophical tradition. The historical situation offers at least a partial explanation -- the pace of philosophical and theological research was so brisk in the twelfth century that many of the established schools enjoyed life spans of at most two or three generations of teachers. The restlessness of the times is embodied to a special degree in Abelard. (1) His writings include commentaries, in many cases several to a work, on the logical works of Aristotle and Porphyry then available, handed down in the form of Boethius' translations, and on Boethius' own logical works. Abelard has to take a number of positions into consideration here: several commentaries on Aristotle by ancient scholars, by Boethius, and by Abelard's own predecessors and teachers, and furthermore the grammatical theories of Priscian and those deriving from Abelard's contemporaries. He discovers with distinctive acumen that the tradition he is examining is disunited and full of tensions on basic questions. It is in the analysis and discussion of these tensions that he finds the field of his own philosophical research. He expects to reach solutions by intensifying the controversies, not by seeking harmony. Thus he traces argument and counter-argument in great thoroughness of detail and from a dizzying succession of points of view, abandoning theses and offering countertheses. What his students could learn from him was not so much a particular theory as his method of formulating and discussing problems.

The situation is much the same for us. If we turn to Abelard in our inquiry into the logic and semantics of the speech sign 'est', we must discover anew the questions which concerned him. In the first Part of this Paper, I will sketch some of the discussions conducted by Abelard in order to make clear in what contexts he found himself confronting questions on the variations of meaning, function, or use of the expression 'est'. In the second part, I will group various theses which Abelard deals with appropriately. It is my intention to plot out the full range of the theories discussed and to mark points of conflict. In the third and final part, I will make some cautious comments on the deeper current of unity to be observed in Abelard's reflections, a current perhaps more easily discernible to the modern eye than it was to Abelard himself.

(1) Cf. Jolivet (1969), Chapter IV; de Rijk (1980). Also compare Häring (1975), who explains the meager transmission of Abelard's works as at least partially attributable to Abelard's style of thinking and writing. His philosophical "works" were not written as books intended to be recopied and handed down but as records of his own thinking to be used in teaching. A thesis which he adheres to with conviction at one point in his writings may reappear later or even in a reworking of the first source as being subject to doubt or in need of revision.


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66. ———. 1999. '"Homo Sentitur", "Homo Intelligitur". Untersuchungen Peter Abaelards


"Abelard's investigations into the philosophy of language are of great interest not only with respect to the history of philosophy, but also with respect to systematic considerations. These investigations, however, are not readily accessible. They offer nothing to a reader who wants to glean information quickly from them. A thorough study is required, and this itself requires extraordinary patience. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the project of making Abelard’s investigations into the philosophy of language accessible to the general philosophical community."


"In his commentary on Aristotle's Peri hermeneias, Abelard distinguishes the form of an expression (oratio) from what it says, that is, its content. The content of an expression is its understanding (intellectus).

This distinction is surely the most well-known and central idea in Abelard's commentary. It provides him with the opportunity to distinguish statements (enuntiationes) from other kinds of xpressions without implying a difference in their content, since the ability of a statement to signify something true or false (verum vel falsum) cannot be found in its content. More precisely, Abelard distinguishes statements both from complete expressions (orationes perfectae) that are not statements but rather questions, requests, commands, etc. and from incomplete expressions, that is, mere word strings (orationes imperfectae), such as homo albus. These kinds of expressions, according to Abelard, do not differ in the understanding they present but in the way they present it." (notes omitted)


Choix de textes pp.111-206.


"Cet article a pour objet de signaler un point de rencontre entre le platonisme et la théorie de la grammaire au moyen âge. La reflexion sur les paronymes y a conduit
presque irresistiblement à des thèses d'allure platonicienne: le rapport de l'adjectif au nom évoquant celui du sensible à l'idée. On observe ce fait non seulement chez des auteurs du 12e siècle (Bernard de Chartres, Abelard...) mais même chez des aristoteliciens du 13e (Boece de Dacie entre autres; Thomas d'Aquin aussi, mais dans un contexte différent). C'est là une manifestation de ce qu'on peut appeler le "platonisme grammatical."


"Le problème des universaux: la doctrine "réaliste" qui croit, plus ou moins suivant les cas à la réalité des genres et des espèces (Guillaume de Champeaux, Abélard de Bath, Gautier de Mortagne, Joscelin de Soissons, Bernard de Chartres, Gilbert de la Porrée), la doctrine "nominaliste" qui déconnecte le mot et la chose: Roscelin, et enfin la solution de Pierre Abélard qui se caractérise par une bipolarité: réalisme et non-réalisme, point de vue sémantique et point de vue syntactique."


Review of the recent literature on Abelard up to 1972; see Mews (1990), for the period 1972-1985.

"C'est un anachronisme que de vouloir qualifier de réalistes ou nominalistes des philosophes qui ont travaillé deux cents ans avant les mises en place doctrinales du xive siècle. D'autre part, il est surprenant de voir leurs doctrines respectives de l'individu se distribuer autrement que ne le feraient présumer leurs vues sur l'universel. Ce point gagne en clarté quand on l'aborde du côté de leurs sémantiques du nom, mais les cadres de l'historiographie usuelle n'en restent pas intacts pour autant." (p. 111)


Conférence internationale "Pierre Abélard, à l'aube des universités" 3-4 octobre 2001 Nantes
"Abelard's philosophy is the first example in the Western tradition of the cast of mind that is now called nominalism. Although his view that universals are mere words (nomina) is typically thought to justify the label, Abelard's nominalism - or better, his irrealism - is in fact the hallmark of his metaphysics. He is an irrealist not only about universals, but also about propositions, events, times other than the present, natural kinds, relations, wholes, absolute space, hylomorphic composites, and the like. Instead, Abelard holds that the concrete individual, in all its richness and variety, is more than enough to populate the world. He preferred reductive, atomist, and material explanations when he could get them: he devoted a great deal of effort to pouring cold water on the metaphysical excesses of his predecessors and contemporaries. Yet unlike modern philosophers, Abelard did not conceive of metaphysics as a distinct branch of philosophy. Following Boethius, he distinguishes philosophy into three branches: logic, concerned with devising and assessing argumentation, an activity also known as dialectic; physics, concerned with speculation on the natures of things and their causes; and ethics, concerned with the upright way of life."
"I argue that Abelard was the author of the first theory of mental language in the Middle Ages, devising a "language of thought" to provide the semantics for ordinary languages, based on the idea that thoughts have linguistic character. I examine Abelard's semantic framework with special attention to his principle of compositionality (the meaning of a whole is a function of the meanings of the parts); the results are then applied to Abelard's distinction between complete and incomplete expressions, as well as the distinction between sentences and the statements which the sentences are used to make. Abelard's theory of mental language is shown to be subtle and sophisticated, the forerunner of the great theories of the fourteenth century."
See Chapter 2: Philosophical and Theological Modalities in Early Medieval Thought.
Boethius' Modal Conceptions 45, New Theological Modalities: from Augustine to Anselm of Canterbury 62; Gilbert of Poitiers, Peter Abelard and Thierry of Chartres 75-98.


"This article considers three medieval approaches to the problem of future contingent propositions in chapter 9 of Aristotle's De Interpretatione. While Boethius assumed that God's atemporal knowledge infallibly pertains to historical events, he was inclined to believe that Aristotle correctly taught that future contingent propositions are not antecedently true or false, even though they may be characterized as true-or-false. Aquinas also tried to combine the allegedly Aristotelian view of the disjunctive truth-value of future contingent propositions with the conception of all things being timelessly present to God's knowledge. The second approach was formulated by Peter Abelard who argued that in Aristotle’s view future contingent propositions are true or false, not merely true-or-false, and that the antecedent truth of future propositions does not necessitate things in the world. After Duns Scotus, many late medieval thinkers thought like Abelard, particularly because of their new interpretation of contingency, but they did not believe, with the exception of John Buridan, that this was an Aristotelian view."


"In the course of the debates on Priscian's notion of the perfect sentence, the philosopher Peter Abelard developed a theory that closely resembles modern accounts of propositional attitudes and that goes far beyond the established Aristotelian conceptions of the sentence. According to Abelard, the perfection of a sentence does not depend on the content that it expresses, but on the fact that the content is stated along with the propositional attitude towards the content. This paper tries to provide an analysis and a consistent interpretation of Abelard's arguments within the framework of the mediaeval models of language and mind."

100. ———. 2007. "Are Thoughts and Sentences Compositional? A Controversy between Abelard and a Pupil of Alberic on the Reconciliation of Ancient Theses on Mind and Language." *Vivarium* no. 45:169-188. "This paper reconstructs a controversy between a pupil of Alberic of Paris and Peter Abelard which illustrates two competing ways of reconciling different ancient traditions. I shall argue that their accounts of the relation between sentences and thoughts are incompatible with one another, although they rely on the same set of sources. The key to understanding their different views on assertive and non-assertive sentences lies in their disparate views about the structure of thoughts: whereas Abelard takes thoughts to be compositional, the opponent’s arguments seem to rely on the premise that the mental states which correspond to sentences cannot be compositional in the way that Abelard suggested. Although, at a first glance, Abelard’s position appears to be more coherent, it turns out that his opponent convincingly argues against weaknesses in Abelard’s semantic theory by proposing a pragmatic approach."


106. ———. 2002. "Des Accidents Aux Tropes. Pierre Abélard." Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale:509-530. "The Author traces the history of individual properties from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in light of D.C. Williams and Campbell's theory of tropes. He compares the relation of co-presence to notions which could seem related such as "syndrome of qualities" or "bundle of qualities". He then examines the validity of ontological particularism for Abelard's philosophy. He studies the non-transferability of tropes in Boethius, Abelard, and its origins in Muslim philosophy (ash'ari theology). He concludes that such an ontological particularism is not necessarily linked to nominalism."

107. Little, Edward F. 1969. "The Status of Current Research on Abelard. Its Implications for the Liberal Arts and Philosophy of the Xith and XIth Centuries." In Arts Libéraux Et Philosophie Au Moyen Age, 1119-1124. Paris: Vrin. "In the last decade of the eleventh and in the first half of the twelfth century questions were asked and argued about the unity and trinity of God, which attracted great attention and led to an independent, autonomous study of theology in the due course of time. Leaders in this movement were Anselm, Roscelin and Abelard. Abelard re-introduced the term "theology" to popular use. Roscelin and Abelard also debated questions which are still considered philosophical, but at the early date even their questions of divinity, or of theology, were not differentiated, other than potentially. The written arguments remaining in our hands today are firmly based in dialectical and logical and linguistic operations. In short they are trivial, in a sense of the word which has gone out of use. In Abélard's case, which concerns us here, it seems for this reason that all his work should be taken into account in a treatment of the liberal arts and philosophy in this period, -- even the "theologies." What seems needed most of all at the present time is a review of the state of our knowledge of Abelard's work. The present paper is directed to this question. After a quick review of modern scholarship, it will note the work being done at the present time and some appealing lines for future activity. It should become clear that, while research of the twentieth century has emphasized Abelard's theology, it has rediscovered the logical, dialectical, and linguistic foundation of that theology. A tendency is to examine it no longer strictly upon its own doctrinal merits, but upon its experimental, logical and philosophical character. This seems appropriate chronologically, in that it evaluates these works within the loose and formative context of their own time and aims. While this article is addressed specifically to this conference, it is also intended to be of use to the general student of Abélard." (p. 1119)


109. Luscombe, David E. 1969. The School of Peter Abélard. The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Contents: Preface IX-XI; List of Abbreviations XII-XIII; I. The Literary Evidence 1; II. Abelard's Followers 14; III: The Diffusion of Abelardian Writings 60; IV. The Condemnation of 1140 103; V. The Theological Writings of Abelard's Closest Disciples
143; VI. The School of Laon 173; VII. Hugh of St Victor 183; VIII. The Summa Sententiarum 198; IX: Abelard and the Decretum of Gratian 214; X. Abelard’s Disciples and the School of St Victor 224; XI. Peter Lombard 261; XII. Robert of Melun 281; XIII. Richard of St Victor 299; XIV. Conclusion 308; Appendices 311; Bibliography 316; Index of Manuscripts 347; General Index 350-360.

“This book represents an historian’s attempt to discern the ways in which Abelard’s thought reached and influenced his contemporaries and successors. The subject has attracted historical study for nearly a century if we take as a starting point the classic article by Heinrich Denifle entitled ‘Die Sentenzen Abaelards und die Bearbeitungen seiner Theologia vor Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts’ which appeared in the Archiv fur Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters in 1885. Since that time much further knowledge of Abelard’s school and of his disciples has accumulated and in addition a vast amount of scholarly energy has been devoted to the task of understanding and of bringing to life twelfth-century thought and learning in its many aspects and moods. With respect to Abelard’s following it is perhaps a fitting time to draw together some threads and to offer an interpretation of its place in the evolution of the early scholastic movement.

The principal sources of this study are literary, biographical, palaeographical and doctrinal. The occasional surviving literary references to Abelard which were made in the twelfth century and later are numerous enough to convey the intensity and the scale of the disagreements which existed concerning his personality and achievement. The names of several of his disciples and hearers are also known and an examination is here attempted of their relationships to Abelard as well as of their reactions to his work and thought. However, information concerning twelfth century personalities is seldom abundant and much can also be gained from studying the codicology of Abelard and his school.

The surviving or known manuscripts of writings by Abelard and by his disciples offer further knowledge of Abelard’s readership and following and therefore also of the general history of formative period in medieval thought. Abelard’s public career was closed in 1140 by an ecclesiastical condemnation. As a condemned heretic whose errors had been vigorously denounced by, among others, Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard’s influence upon his age was limited and tainted. That he was survived by disciples is an established fact, but what was done by these disciples to develop or to qualify his teaching still requires examination. It seems that the condemnation of 1140 raised as many questions as it solved and that the conflicts between Abelard’s critics and his defenders in the schools entailed serious disagreements not only over outlook and method but also over specific teachings which continued to be debated in the years that followed. The stimulus which Abelard gave to the study of particular ideas and themes outlived the condemnation of 1140 and some of the criticisms which were levelled against Abelard at this time were an insufficient guide to his contemporaries. Already within the school of Hugh of St Victor a more sophisticated and refined study of Abelard’s thought was in progress, and it was this which provided the springboard for many future doctrinal developments. Throughout the 1130s, 40s and 50s the interaction of the rival traditions of the schools of Abelard and of Hugh is a striking feature of theological discussion. If the Sentences of Peter Lombard, which enjoyed such a prolonged influence throughout the medieval period, may be regarded as the climax of continuous activity by schoolmen during the first half of the twelfth century, then it is clear that Abelard, for all his exaggerations and errors, was a major and continuing stimulus to debate and thought.

I have tried in the following pages to illustrate primarily the development of theological thought in approximately the first half of the twelfth century by reference not only to Abelard’s disciples but also to major teachers of the various schools of the period such as Gratian of Bologna, Hugh and Richard of St Victor, Peter Lombard and Robert of Melun. I have not tried to be exhaustive and much could be said about the relationship between Abelard and other writers; the Porretans in particular are little mentioned. So much is added yearly to knowledge of the literature and thought of this period that much of what appears below will soon be subject to modification and revision.” (from the Preface, IX-X).


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