PLATONISM AND POETRY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres
Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century

THE LITERARY INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOL OF CHARTRES

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For Paul Piehler
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PREFACE

It will be obvious how much this study owes to previous scholarship, particularly in regard to twelfth-century intellectual history. A secondary purpose of my work, in fact, is to show the relevance to literary study of the work of scholars concerned with twelfth-century philosophy, theology, and biblical study. There is a tendency to treat medieval literary theory as static, its laws irrevocably fixed by St. Augustine or by the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, but its evolution was gradual, and can not be separated from developments in these other fields. Aside from the standard works of Chenu and de Lubac, my principal auctores have been Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, Roger Baron, Tullio Gregory, Edouard Jeanneau, Theodore Silverstein, and Jerome Taylor. I regret not having become familiar earlier with Robert Javelet's important volumes on the *imago Dei* in twelfth-century thought; in particular his analyses of the roles of cosmological and physical doctrines in Victorine and Cistercian authors would have enriched greatly the comparisons I suggest between the Chartrians and other schools of thought in the period.

In dealing with the position of poetry in the twelfth century I have often been guided by Huizinga's pioneering study of Alain de Lille. His insights into the relations of poetry and philosophy remain fresh and important after forty years, and my few specific citations are not an adequate reflection of his contribution to this study. I have also found particularly suggestive Richard McKeon's analysis of the ambiguous status of poetry in twelfth-century thought, and Silverstein's demonstration of how, in the work of Bernardus Silvestris, poetry supplements philosophy and presents its insights in a subtler, more oblique and less controversial form than rational argumentation can attain. The precedent of Peter Dronke's bold interpretations of the medieval lyric has encouraged me to follow out my own intuitions as to the meaning of the complex imagery of the Chartrian poets. The particular focus of this study has enabled me to make only limited use of the writings of C. S. Lewis and D. W. Robertson, but despite basic disagreements
my reading of medieval poetry has been fundamentally affected by both. To have thought through one’s quarrels with these critics is to realize the extent of their contribution to our understanding of medieval allegory.

One note of clarification seems necessary, regarding the frequent mention in the following pages of the School of Chartres, “Chartrian” ideas and “Chartrian” poetry. It must be understood that the Chartrian label is largely a matter of convenience, and refers to a body of ideas and the scholars and poets who developed them, as well as to an institution precisely located in place and time. Most of the major figures with whom I deal had close ties with the actual cathedral school at Chartres, where Bernard lectured and where Thierry’s “Heptateuch” came to define the program of studies; but as R. W. Southern has recently shown, the evidence linking Guillaume de Conches, John of Salisbury, Bernardus Silvestris, and Gilbert de la Porrée with the School has been somewhat overworked, and many hypotheses about the role of Chartres in the humanist movement of the twelfth century have unjustly assumed the status of dogma. In any case, as I hope will be sufficiently clear, my main concern is with a continuity of intellectual interests, and with the development of certain ideas and motifs in philosophy and poetry.
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The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1108-09. Adelhard of Bath, De eodem et diverso
1114-26. Bernard, teacher of Guillaume de Conches and Gilbert de la Porrée, teaching at Chartres
1115-50. Thierry (brother of Bernard?) active in the schools
1119-25. Peter Abelard, Introductio ad theologiam, Theologia christiana
1120-54. Guillaume de Conches active in the schools
1130. Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon
1138-41. John of Salisbury a student under Guillaume de Conches
1142. Metamorphosis Goliae episcopi
1147. Bernardus Silvestris, De mundi universitate (Cosmographia), dedicated to Thierry
1150-60. Roman d'Eneas
1159. John of Salisbury, Metalogicon
1160-70. Alain de Lille, De planctu naturae
1165-70. Chrétien de Troyes, Erec et Enide
1175. Matthew of Vendome, Ars versificatoria
1182. Alain de Lille, Anticlaudianus
1184. Jean de Hanville, Architrenius
1185-87. Andreas Capellanus, De amore
1240. Henri d'Andeli, Li Bataille des vii ars
INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this book are three: to characterize the work of an important group of twelfth-century poets; to explain the intellectual background against which their work must be read and the conception of poetry on which it is based; and to suggest their place in the literary history of the twelfth century, the period when medieval poetry came into its own. The dominant figures in this group are the philosophical allegorists Bernardus Silvestris, Alain de Lille, and Jean de Hanville, and the unifying element in their work is their common engagement with the Platonism of the School of Chartres.

That the Chartrian poets are "important" has been recognized for a long time, but their importance has been variously explained. It was a century ago that Hauréau compared Bernardus Silvestris to Dante, and claimed to see in Alain de Lille "le plus second et le plus brillant de tous les mystiques de ce temps." Since Hauréau wrote the meaning and the merits of these poets have been much debated. Much has been made of their role in promulgating "naturalist" views and so preparing the way for the arch-naturalist Jean de Meun; this is the theme of a famous essay by Faral, and has been elaborated with varying degrees of distortion by subsequent critics. But no less an authority than Étienne Gilson has argued the essential orthodoxy of the allegory of Bernardus Silvestris, R. H. Green has reassessed the poems of Alain de Lille to the same end, and the standard of Paul and Augustine has been planted in the rich earth of the Roman de la Rose itself by D. W. Robertson and his followers. Eugenio Garin and Cesare Vasoli have responded to Gilson and Green by pointing out the difficulty of classifying such complex syntheses as those of Bernardus and Alain on the basis of their orthodoxy or heterodoxy, and have reopened in a more tentative way the old question of naturalistic elements.

The School of Chartres itself has been the subject of a similar debate but here, at least, a reasonably balanced judgment can now be made. Our knowledge of twelfth-century Platonism has greatly increased in recent years, making it possible to see the thought of
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Chartres as less isolated and less subversive than it had once appeared, and to recognize the definite limits within which a prevailing traditionalism allowed it to develop. Though the Chartrians plainly exercised a new freedom in their cosmological speculations and their reliance on secular auctores, and incurred a certain amount of criticism from traditionalists, their methods and insights were also exploited in twelfth-century spirituality, and subsumed by an "anagogical" view of nature derived from the pseudo-Dionysius and John Scotus Eriugena. Both the real differences which existed between Chartrian Platonism and the more mystical thought of their contemporaries—between what I call "rationalism" and "symbolism"—and the synthesis which was effected between the two points of view are important for an understanding of the poetry inspired by Chartrian thought.

The great originality of the Chartrians consisted in their emphasis on the rational and scientific as against traditional authority. At the same time they were continually engaged with syncretistic and "sapiential" conceptions in which intuition played a major role. Where this intuitive element was not reduced to a version of the anagogical, symbolist point of view, it tended to express itself in what may most simply be called poetry. Chartrian thought, it can be said, begins and ends in a kind of poetry: poetic intuition is finally the only means of linking philosophy and theology, pagan auctores and Christian doctrine, sapientia and eloquentia. The Chartrian ideal of a "cohaerentia artium," a perfect marriage of Philology and Mercury, is ultimately a poetic metaphor, a figure no more capable of objective realization than Cardinal Newman's omniscient Man of Philosopher Habit.

In the symbolist view, poetry in this sense is displaced by an avowed mysticism, for it looks to a reality which is beyond conceptualization in even the purest Platonic terms. It is the difference between seeing in nature as a whole the copy of an ideal world, analogous to, and so metaphorically accessible in terms of, our own world, and seeing in nature only a cluster of individual natures, any of which can be fully understood only as it is seen to
embody the divine. Poetry is the highest possible expression of the rationalist view, completing its hard-won insights into the *musica mundana*; but to the symbolist view, whose objects are real only in a sense that transcends human insight, poetry of this Platonic sort is finally irrelevant. The rationalist's allegory begins with the discovery and, as it were, the personification of natural forces and processes; the symbolist's, on the level of the bestiary or lapidary, in a poetry which already defies analysis.

As we will see, the opposition between rationalism and symbolism is by no means absolute: Hugh of St. Victor, probably the single most influential "symbolist," was deeply versed in the rationalist cosmological tradition, and incorporated a number of typically Chartrian insights into the system of his *De Sacramentis*. Conversely, we find the philosopher Gundissalinus drawing on Hugh's analysis of divine revelation in expounding the heterodox Arabic doctrine of the "three worlds." The clear opposition between Hugh and Guillaume de Conches did not prevent a mid-twelfth-century compiler from trying to combine the *Didascalicon* and the *De philosophia mundi*, and similar fusions of Chartrian and Victorine thought were attempted by the Cistercian Garnier de Rochefort and the Porretan theologian Alain de Lille. For the two views have in common a deep concern with the ascent of the mind to the vision of truth, "per creaturas ad creatorem." This is the great theme of the poets of the Chartrian tradition, and in the *De mundi universitate* and *Anticlaudianus* rationalism and symbolism function together far more effectively than in the more scientific theology of the period.

This is of course a complex subject and will be treated in detail below. More easily explained and of equal importance for later literature are the fortunes of the School of Chartres itself. An anti-philosophical movement seems to have developed in the schools of northern France toward the mid-century, centered among the Cistercians but visible also at St. Victor, and its effect was to discredit the study of the *artes* as a worthy accompaniment to serious religious thought. During the general decline of liberal studies in the
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next few decades, the study of the *auctores* was carried on chiefly at such centers as Tours and Orleans, where *grammatici* paid lip-service to the ideal of the omniscient philosopher but were mainly interested in their own special varieties of belles-lettres. In the history of humanism it was, as Bolgar says, a period of selective assimilation, following naturally on the great advances of the earlier years of the century. There was also a tendency to take the *auctores* less seriously, and to value modern culture more highly in comparison. The *artes poeticae* appeared, challenging students to essay the *ornatus difficilis* for themselves, and setting modern examples of style side by side with *flores* from the classical poets. Latin as well as vernacular poetry used modern forms for classical themes, suggesting a new familiarity. In all of this the tradition of Chartres had its influence: Bernardus Silvestris turned the essence of Chartrian thought into poetry in his much-imitated *De mundi universitate*; the apparatus of learning which Guillaume de Conches had applied to the *integumenta* of the *Timaeus* survived to point a moral in the glosses of Arnulf of Orleans on Ovid and Lucan; Jean de Hanville lectured at Rouen on the inseparability of universal learning from great poetry, and was felt by many to have attained this lofty ideal in his *Architrenius*.

Indeed it was as a result of its relegation to the sphere of mere literature that Chartrian thought found its noblest and most influential expression in the series of philosophical allegories which is the principal concern of this study. With the cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus* and the theory of macrocosm and microcosm as a framework, these poems explore the significance of the cosmos as a motive force and source of meaning in human existence, centering on the ordering power of nature and natural philosophy as means to stability and moral guidance. They exploit the freedom of reference discovered by Guillaume de Conches in the *integumenta*, the philosophical myths and metaphors of the *Timaeus*, and emulate the richly suggestive diction and imagery of Martianus Capella and Boethius, as well as the more mystical Neoplatonism of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, and so serve to crystallize a number of major traditions in twelfth-century thought.
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As I shall try to show, however, it is essential to recognize in the work of these poets not simply a poeticizing of, but a development from previous thought; for as J.A.W. Bennett observes, each poet “continues the exploration both of what may be said in terms of poetry, and of the manner of saying it, beyond the point to which the exploration has been carried before.” This extension and refinement typify the relations of poets within the tradition, as well as their common relation to the Platonisms current in their day. It is evident in their changing response to the cosmic model which provides the framework for their allegories. All the Chartrian poets were deeply aware of the sense in which their cosmology, and the rhetorical ornatus with which the auctores had adorned it, stood for a perfection of consciousness, an integration with the musica mundana, which man has lost, and toward which he yearns in his art and speculation. This insight gives continuity to the attempts of these poets to adapt their allegory to other and more complicated aspects of human experience than the philosophical relationships which are their donnée. In the poems of Bernardus and Alain, Chartrian humanism becomes itself a theme for poetry, and the quest for knowledge is shown to be less important than the act of self-definition implicit in it. In the Architrenius of Jean de Hanville, and in the Roman de la Rose as augmented by Jean de Meun, the framework of society interposes itself between man and nature, and the old Platonist assumptions about the guiding power of cosmic order are subjected to the test of worldly experience. The ascent to spiritual vision becomes a less immediate concern than the need to recover from the descensus ad inferos, the immersion of the spirit in the chaos and duplicity of earthly life. As worldly standards of largitas and curialitas are set in coexistence with traditional moral values, and with the scholarly “comprehensio eorum quae sunt” declared by Thierry of Chartres to be the mark of the wise man, ambiguities inevitably arise, and often seem to reflect the deliberate intention of the author. This conflict of ideal and worldly values finds its allegorical counterpart in a tension between formal and realistic elements of personification and detail which gradually leads to the total transformation of the old allegorical patterns, and
finally, in the work of such late medieval poets as Chaucer, to their
fragmentation. But these late developments are beyond the scope
of the present study.

Nearly half of this book is devoted to the intellectual milieu of
Chartrian poetry. I have tried to show the function of poetic imagi-
ation in the thought of Chartres, which was particularly con-
cerned with the implications of analogy, and sought constantly to
device an epistemology adequate to its sense of the implications of
formal order, in the universe and in the mind. This poetic element
in philosophical speculation was closely bound up with a new will-
ingness to recognize deep significance in the writings of the "au-
tores," and reveals a conception of the capacities of human reason
and imagination which was outgrowing the restrictive assumptions
of earlier monastic "accessus ad auctores" and pedagogical writings.
Literary theory and practice were intimately related in the twelfth
century, and a new appreciation of the vision and techniques of
the ancient authors inspired "moderni" to expand the range of their
own art and address problems not readily definable in terms of
conventional wisdom. As background to discussing the exploitation
of ancient forms and themes by the poets of the Chartrian tradi-
tion, I have devoted a chapter to the allegories of Boethius and
Martianus Capella, and the commentaries of Guillaume de Con-
ches and Bernardus Silvestris upon them. Both Boethius and Mar-
tianus dramatize the experience of the philosopher, and they were,
with Plato, the most influential exponents of the theme which, as
formulated in the commentaries of Bernardus, became virtually the
archetypal pattern of Chartrian allegory: the theme of what may
be called intellectual pilgrimage, the experience of the spirit in its
attempts to rise above its earthly situation through an understand-
ing of "naturalia" and attain a vision of truth. This theme, common
to Bernardus, Alain de Lille, and Jean de Hanville, was recognized
by them as a unifying concern of the great "auctores" from Plato to
Boethius, and was, of course, so regarded by Dante.

In a brief chapter on the poetry of the schools I have tried to
give a representative survey of the adaptation of the themes and
motifs of the Chartrians and their "auctores" to the uses of various
minor poetic genres. In addition to illustrating the more general shifts from cosmology to psychology, and philosophy to poetry, which mark the course of the Chartist tradition from the mid-twelfth century, these poems dramatize and elaborate problems encountered by the Chartrians. The *Metamorphosis Goliæ*, written shortly after the death of Abelard, is perhaps the most striking document we have regarding the uncertain situation of humanism in the face of the authoritarian reaction mentioned above. It is also a paradigmatic illustration of the uneasy relationship between mythology and cosmology in the Chartist reading of classical poetry, the difficulty of reconciling violence and adultery among the gods with their roles as symbols of cosmic and psychological order. This general theme, exploited for a variety of purposes in erotic and satirical verse, is explored at length by the Chartist allegorists, and provides a link between their epic themes and those of later twelfth-century poetry in general.

The chapters which follow are devoted to the major works of Bernardus and Alain, and to a general and very tentative survey of relations between the Chartrians and vernacular poets. The allegories of Bernardus and Alain may be seen as complementary. Bernardus' account of the creation in his *De mundi universitate* says all that can be said about the human condition in strictly "natural" terms, and his cosmogony serves finally to define, by the limitations it reveals, the need for a new dispensation. In his *De planctu naturæ* and *Anticlaudianus* Alain develops the relation of the new dispensation to the old in a series of rich sexual and cosmic metaphors which provide innumerable points of comparison. His synthesis of mystical and cosmological Platonism may be seen as a poetic counterpart to the system of the *De sacramentis* of Hugh of St. Victor. Both Bernardus and Alain, in their development of imagery capable of linking allusively the orders of nature and grace, and in their elaboration of the "epic" aspects of their theme, reveal striking affinities with the early romancers, notably Chrétien de Troyes and the anonymous author of the *Eneas*.

A final chapter deals with two works in which Chartist allegory is tested by the facts of life in the world. The *Architreniūs*, by Jean
INTRODUCTION

de Hanville, is both the least known and the most controversial of major Chartrian allegories. It seems deliberately to reject Alain's assertion of the need for redemption, and the total transformation of man's natural state, and seeks instead a purely natural norm by which human life may be rectified. The Architrenius is the earliest attempt to incorporate significant amounts of realistic detail into what remains basically a cosmological allegory. The bulk of the poem is a ramble through scenes illustrative of the vices of the age, but it begins and ends as a quest for the meaning of Nature. Its structure, and its mixture of the realistic and the abstract, give the work a strong resemblance to the Roman de la Rose, and like the Roman it raises questions which it cannot answer. In the very process of redirecting the Chartrian tradition and bringing its influence to bear on social themes, Jean de Hanville signals the beginning of the end of the tradition in its recognizable form. His search for a rational alternative to the Christian Platonist view of man is undertaken in a spirit more strictly humanistic than that of Bernardus or Alain, but he lacked both their philosophical understanding and their powers of synthesis, and his assertion of the standard of Moderation as the answer to the problems raised by his poem is deeply unsatisfying. The Architrenius is finally most significant in its anticipation of the concern with the relations of authority and experience, institution and practice, which characterizes the poetry of the later middle ages.

From the work of Jean de Hanville it is only a step to that of Jean de Meun, whose use of Chartrian materials seems to be carefully confined to the delineation of problems, and who does not attempt to vindicate the view of life which his allegory portrays. His elusive and ironic point of view toward his human personae looks forward beyond the middle ages, and the real affinity of the Roman is with the great satires of the Renaissance humanists.
CHAPTER ONE

TWELFTH-CENTURY PLATONISM
AND THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM

1. The Twelfth-Century Renaissance

In his *Dialogus super auctores*, composed in the early twelfth century, Conrad of Hirsau warns his students about reading Ovid.¹ The *Fasti* and the *Ex Ponto*, he says, contain tolerable matter, but the *Metamorphoses* present problems. At times Ovid seems to have deviated into sense in the poem: the “quisquis fuit ille deorum” of the opening cosmogony, like the Athenian altar “to the unknown God” of Acts 17, suggests a dim awareness of a deity who is one and supreme. But the work as a whole is idolatrous. It tells of men transformed into beasts and stones and birds, and so denies that rationality which proves man to be made in God’s image.

Toward the end of the twelfth century Arnulf of Orleans, introducing his commentary on the *Metamorphoses*, gives a different account of the poem.² Far from making light of the power of reason, he says, Ovid has attempted “so to describe mutability that we may understand by it not simply those changes which take place around us, altering material things for good or ill, but those also which take place inwardly, in the soul.” By these means, Arnulf tells us, Ovid seeks “to recall us from error to a recognition of the true creator.”

To explain this spiritual theme, and the correspondence of internal change with cosmic mutability on which it depends, Arnulf describes the two basic movements of the soul: an irrational tendency which imitates the wanderings of the planets, and a rational countermovement like that of the stable firmament; for the firmament governs the planets just as the rational principle should gov-

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ern the irrational and sensual. This tension in the soul accounts for a broad opposition between spiritual and earthly tendencies of will which the Metamorphoses depict through fable. In showing transformations from one state of being to another, Ovid stresses continually “the stability of heavenly things and the changeableness of things on earth.” And so, Arnulf concludes, the poem is of great value in providing an “erudicio divinorum habita ex mutacione temporalium.”

In principle at least, Conrad and the tradition of monastic study which he represents cannot allow Ovid’s masterpiece a higher status than that of a handy collection of stories and a model of Latin style. Arnulf is clearly more willing to assess the poem on what he takes to be its own terms. He respects the poet’s intuitions and brings a broad range of learning to the task of extracting his deeper meaning. He clearly sees the utilitas of the Metamorphoses as involving much more than its value as a compendium, or a source of exemplary lessons in moral conduct, the highest function that Conrad will allow any pagan author.

But the very different approaches of the two commentators are determined by historical factors as well as differences of intention. Arnulf’s interpretation reflects important intellectual developments which had taken place between Conrad’s time and his own.

3 On classical poetry in the monastic schools prior to the twelfth century, see Jean Leclercq, The Love of Letters and the Desire for God, tr. Catherine Misrahi (New York, 1961), pp. 139-84; R. R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 183-201. Though Ovid was, of course, well known in the early middle ages, such documentary evidence as exists suggests a relative lack of interest in the Metamorphoses. The one pre-twelfth-century commentary known to me which deals with Ovid’s philosophy does so partly on the assumption that Ovid was a crypto-Christian; see C. Meiser, “Ueber einen Commentar zu den Metamorphosen des Ovid,” Sitzungsberichte der kgl. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (1885), pp. 49-52; Bernhard Bischoff, “Living with the Satirists,” in Classical Influences on European Culture. A.D. 500-1500, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 83-84.

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His assumption that Ovid's fables are the figural embodiment of philosophical insights, his ready recourse to the structure of the universe for an illustration of the principles of Ovid's psychology, and the close association he suggests between the perception of cosmic order and the "cognitio veri creatoris," all show him responsive to the influence of the "twelfth-century renaissance," with its rediscovery of man and the natural world. An important feature of this rediscovery was a new humanism, a new conception of the value to be derived from the study of the ancient auctores; and it was typified by a firm trust in the quasi-poetic cosmology of Plato's Timaeus as a source of insight into the meaning of man's cosmic relations. The capacious intellectual framework within which Arnulf places his author and the rich thematic implications, moral and psychological, of the poetic erudicio which he finds in the Metamorphoses, are of the essence of twelfth-century humanism, and they are the critical counterpart to a new seriousness of spirit and breadth of scope which the poets of the schools, writing in emulation of the auctores, had begun to exhibit a generation or so before Arnulf wrote.

It is with these developments and their implications for medieval poetry in general that this book is primarily concerned, and the purpose of this chapter is to sketch the intellectual history of the shift in attitude which I have illustrated by comparing Conrad and Arnulf. I will try to show how the cosmology to which Arnulf alludes was developed in twelfth-century thought, and how it came to hold a special significance for the interpretation of poetry, even such subtle and elusive poetry as Ovid's. We will see, in this and the following chapter, how mythical and psychological analyses of human life were related to this Platonic model, and how, in the


Another application of Burckhardt's famous definition of the Renaissance to the twelfth century is the conclusion to Etienne Gilson, Heloise and Abelard, tr. L. K. Shook (Ann Arbor, 1960), pp. 124-44.
course of the century, there emerged a new recognition of the nature and value of imaginative literature as a source of knowledge about God and man.

It goes without saying that these events of literary history are part of a broader movement. The widening of intellectual horizons in the twelfth century was made possible in the first place by social changes. The settling of the Normans in England and Sicily, the flourishing of French feudalism, the expansion of the governmental structure of the Church, all contributed to the demand for lawyers and statesmen, clear thinkers and effective writers, so that facilities for training such men assumed a new importance. This in turn gave rise to a new emphasis on the study of the classical authors, who had never lost their place in education as models of correctness and eloquence. The conquest of Sicily and the reconquest of Spain brought the Latin world into contact with Greek and Arab science and philosophy, an encounter which did much to stimulate the twelfth century’s concern with cosmology and metaphysics.

The “renaissance” thus effected was by no means cohesive, and its influence was far from universal: literary studies, under the pressure of practical necessity, declined all too easily to the level of the *ars dictaminis*, whose students, with a few noble exceptions, paid lip-service to the high principles of ancient rhetoric while devoting themselves to letter-writing. The influence of the pioneering transmitters of Greek and Arab lore was slow and haphazard, due perhaps to their wandering in search of new texts and intellectual adventures, and revealed itself as much in a widespread fascination with astrology and divination as in the development of a rational view of nature. But it is plain enough that the early

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The development of a richer and more humane conception of secular learning and a serious interest in the order and meaning of the natural world is paralleled by certain features of twelfth-century spiritual thought. The relations between the human psyche and its macrocosmic environment were a theme for mystical vision and spiritual exercise as well as scientific investigation, and thinkers so diverse as Guillaume de St. Thierry, Hildegarde of Bingen, and Adelhard of Bath show a common concern to curb human curiositas, the aimless love of earthly multiplicity, by posing an alternative, structured vision accessible through intuition of a reality underlying the visibilia of nature. For the contemplative, a mystical awareness of cosmic symbolism could perform a function strikingly analogous to that of "scientific" Platonism in the speculation of the philosophers. Otto Von Simson, tracing the development of Gothic architecture at St.-Denis and Chartres, has shown how Platonist cosmology and Neoplatonist mysticism conspired with Augustinian musical and mathematical theory to produce an architecture in which cosmic and anagogical vision were synthesized in the form of the sanctuary itself.

This capacity for synthesis is a great achievement of the twelfth

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8 This aspect of twelfth-century psychology is documented by Edgar de Bruyne, *Études d'esthétique médiévale* (Bruges, 1946) II, 130-45.
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century, a manifestation of that “mentalité symbolique” whose intellectual history has been written by M. D. Chenu.\textsuperscript{10} Noting the growing importance of figurative expression, metaphor and symbol, in the articulation of religious ideas, Chenu sees it as reflecting a pervasive sense of “the mysterious kinship between the physical world and the realm of the sacred.” Natural objects are increasingly regarded as expressive of a higher presence operative in and through them, and the response takes forms so diverse as the debate over universals, a new interest in medicine and astrology, and exploratory ventures into the psychology of love. The universe is seen in terms of the cosmic eroticism of hermetic tradition, or the emanationism of the pseudo-Dionysius; man is the center of creation, the hub of the intellectualized cosmos of scientific Platonism, or he is an alien, all but lost in the dense symbolic undergrowth of Arthurian romance.

All these views reflect in some degree a cooperation of imaginative thought and expression with religious vision. They point to a higher world accessible, as Chenu remarks,\textsuperscript{11} by a “transposition,” a metaphorical reading of the sensible world. “Such symbolic transposition,” he goes on, “was the admirable means of penetrating the mysterious material density of things—natural objects or historical personages, biblical or profane—and of getting ‘through the shell, to the savory kernel of truth.’ Poetry was in the service of wisdom—of philosophical or theological wisdom.”

Chenu is speaking broadly here; by “poetry” he means only the recourse to allegory in a general sense, and so he uses the terms “symbol” and “metaphor” almost interchangeably. But in the twelfth century, as Chenu also observes,\textsuperscript{12} there was a new tendency to distinguish between these two modes of \textit{figura}, and they came to serve two more or less distinct approaches to the relations between the sensible world and transcendent reality. The relationship between these two approaches, which I have found it convenient to label the “rationalist” and the “symbolic,” will be a major concern of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{La théologie}, pp. 159-90 (Taylor-Little, pp. 99-145).
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 160 (Taylor-Little, p. 100).
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 175-78 (Taylor-Little, pp. 123-28).
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Metaphor was a fundamental tool of those rationalist philosophers who sought knowledge of God from the study of the structure of the universe and the complex laws, causes, and analogies by which it is linked with the human mind. Symbolism, on the other hand, lent itself to an “anagogical,” an open-ended, and ultimately mystical view, closely related to the traditions of biblical exegesis, but tending increasingly to embrace the natural world as well, under the influence of a renewed interest in the cosmic sacra-
mentalism of the pseudo-Dionysius and John Scotus Eriugena. In this view naturalia were of value to the extent that they could be seen as directly reflective of God.

The symbolist and rationalist points of view were closely inter-
related, and appear at times to be virtually indistinguishable, but it is important to recognize that they were by no means simply complementary. Indeed the differences between them provided the occasion for an ongoing debate which affected every area of twelfth-century thought. The relation of biblical to secular studies underwent profound changes during the century: the Liberal Arts assumed a new importance in the exegesis of sacred texts,13 while the modes of symbolic interpretation traditionally associated with Scripture were extended to extrabiblical history and the natural world.14 The development of a theology devoted to seeking the truth of Scripture through the employment of the Arts and the study of nature stimulated serious debate over the extent to which dialectic and secular learning might be allowed to encroach upon the traditional province of exegesis, and the authority of Plato be permitted to coexist with that of Augustine.15

A striking instance of the impact of new ideas is the development

13 See C. Spicq, Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au moyen âge (Paris, 1943), pp. 66-83; Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Medi
14 See Chenu, La théologie, pp. 159-72 (Taylor-Little, pp. 99-119); de Lubac, Exégèse n.i, pp. 9-14.
15 On the “Platonisms” of the twelfth century see Chenu, La théologie, pp. 108-41 (Taylor-Little, pp. 49-98); Spicq, Esquisse, pp. 77-78; de Lubac, Exégèse i.i, pp. 79-88, 110-18.
which has been called “the elimination of time,” the displacement of the continually evolving plan of salvation by the self-contained structure of the natural universe as a framework for the analysis and dramatization of spiritual experience. The sort of symbolic thinking I have mentioned as typical of the century is the product of a concern with the nature of spiritual reality, its relation to the visible creation, the opus Sapientiae, and the psychological process involved in its apprehension; what is often hard to detect is a clear concern with the temporal orientation of the soul in relation to the Last Things. Eschatology in its traditional forms is challenged in twelfth-century thought by an “anagogy” strongly influenced by, and tending always to verge into Neoplatonism, and it is clear that this development is connected with the age’s pervasive interest in cosmology. It reflects, of course, only a shift of emphasis, rather than a deliberate substitution, and its radical implications are to a great extent neutralized in the great theological syntheses of a Hugh of St. Victor or an Alain de Lille, where cosmology and history are presented as complementary manifestations of God’s wisdom. But these thinkers too are keenly sensitive to new modes of thought and expression, and indeed, as I shall try to show, a comparison of Hugh with Alain may serve as an index to the effect of these developments in the course of the century. They stand at opposite ends of a period of debate and experimentation which saw the rise and decline of a great movement of humanistic and scientific thought, a movement of which the signs are visible everywhere in Europe, but which has traditionally been most closely identified with the cathedral school at Chartres.

It was apparently at Chartres, during the School’s relatively brief flowering, that the scientific and humanist strains of twelfth-cen-


17 See Chenu, La théologie, pp. 120-35, 174-78 (Taylor-Little, pp. 79-88, 123-28); de Lubac, Exégèse i.i, pp. 640-42.