

A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy



Edited by Peter Dronke

THIERRY OF CHARTRES

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1.1 The little information that we have about Thierry of Chartres's life and career has become less in recent years: even some of the apparently safer assumptions about him have lately been challenged. It is certain that he was born in Brittany, that he was Chancellor of Chartres in the 1140s, that he retired from this position to a monastery at some point in the 1150s, and died after 1156.¹ It is not certain, though likely, that he was the younger brother of Bernard of Chartres,² the renowned teacher – some of whose ideas are recorded by John of Salisbury – who was *magister* at the school of Chartres from before 1117, and later (till 1124) its chancellor. It is also uncertain how far Thierry's teaching activities, in the years before his own chancellorship, can be linked with Chartres itself, rather than with Paris (as is commonly, though on somewhat meagre evidence, affirmed),³ or with some other centre.

1 Cf. A. Vernet, 'Une épitaphe inédite de Thierry de Chartres', in *Recueil de travaux offert à Cl. Brunel* (2 vols., Paris 1955) II 660–70 (on the date of Thierry's death, p. 667).

2 Doubts were raised by R. W. Southern, 'Humanism and the School of Chartres', *Medieval Humanism* (Oxford 1970), pp. 61–85 (at p. 69); but N. Häring, 'Chartres and Paris Revisited', in *Essays in Honour of Anton Charles Pegis* (Toronto 1974), pp. 268–329, after a careful re-assessment of the evidence (pp. 295–7), concludes that the assumption that Thierry and Bernard were brothers is 'not unreasonable'.

3 As Häring (1974, pp. 284f) notes, 'By calling him "magistrum Teodoricum Carnotensem" Master Balderic [of Trier] indicates the place where he lived at the time, just as "Hugo Parisiensis" means Hugh of St Victor. I would add that the fact that Thierry was frequently called "Carnotensis", and never "Parisiensis", suggests that we should not, in the absence of positive documentation, assume he spent any substantial part of his life in Paris. This assumption is made not only by Southern (*Platonism, Scholastic Method, and the School of Chartres* (Reading 1979), p. 26, and *Harvard* 1982, p. 130), but by Häring himself, who claims, for instance, on the basis of the line 'Ibi doctor cernitur ille Carnotensis' in the poem *Metamorphosis Goliae* (composed 1142/3) that 'the author ... saw Thierry in Paris' (1974, p. 285). In the context of this poem, however, *ibi* plainly refers not to Paris but to a wholly imaginary location, the *locus amoenus* described by the author. So, too, it is inadmissible to infer, as Häring does (1974, p. 287), from William of Tyre's references to men who were taught by Thierry of Chartres, that Thierry had taught them in Paris: William's text (ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Latomus* XXI (1962) 822) gives no indication of place. Similarly, Häring's assertion that Clarembald, who studied with Hugh of Saint-Victor (in Paris) as well as with Thierry, 'seems to have attended Thierry's lectures at the same time in the same city' (1974, p. 280; italics mine), is not confirmed by anything in the text of Clarembald's letter where he mentions these two teachers.

Like Bernard of Chartres, Thierry made an unforgettable impact on more than one generation of scholars. Today both men would be known as 'charismatic' teachers. Among Thierry's disciples, Clarembald of Arras calls him 'the foremost philosopher in the whole of Europe',⁴ John of Salisbury, 'the most learned of explorers of the liberal arts'.⁵ In 1143 Hermann of Carinthia, about to complete his major original work of cosmology, the *De essentiis*, addresses Thierry as his 'fondest teacher (*diligentissime preceptor*)', and dedicates to him, 'the soul of Plato granted once again by heaven to mortals', his translation of Ptolemy's *Planisphere*.⁶ In 1147/8, Bernard Silvestris dedicates his epic *Cosmographia* 'to Thierry, by true proclamations of opinion most renowned of teachers'.⁷ A long and awestruck epitaph for Thierry also survives, beginning 'Aristotle's worthy successor, Theodoricus, lies here ...'.⁸

Yet Thierry left no finished work comparable in scale or stature to the *De essentiis* or the *Cosmographia*. What survives consists mainly of commentaries, first (probably in the 1130s) on the widely studied pair of works on rhetoric, Cicero's *De inventione* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Ad Herennium*,⁹ then (towards 1150) on Boethius' brief theological treatises;¹⁰ finally, perhaps soon after 1150, there is the incomplete commentary on the opening

The only link between Thierry and Paris that is known to me is made by Anselm of Havelberg in his poetic biography of Adelbert of Mainz, *Vita Adelberti* (ed. P. Jaffé, *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum* III) II 680 ff (pp. 589–92). Anselm states that it was when Adelbert came to Paris ('Parisius, locus eximius bene cultus, inquit') that people began to tell him of Thierry's excellence and fame ('cepit ei dici virtus et fama Thedrici'); that he went to visit Thierry *non segniter* (not *non sequitur*, as Häring 1974, p. 283, has it); that he 'deigned to be called and to be Thierry's disciple (*discipulus dici dignatur et esse Thedrici*)' – thus the biographer points the difference of rank between the two men; and finally that, when Adelbert was about to return to Germany, it was in Paris that he bade Thierry a fond farewell ('Hinc facie tristi lugens petit ora magistri ... largitus et oscula grata, / cum numero turbe prodit pius exul ab urbe'). While these verses allow at least a plausible inference that Thierry was residing in Paris at this time (soon after 1130) – rather than, say, living somewhere relatively near and visiting Paris on occasion – they are hardly a safe basis for constructing an extensive teaching-career in Paris for him. Southern's assertion (1979, p. 26), that 'from about 1115 to 1142 ... we know him as a Breton master teaching in Paris', has nothing to support it.

4 *Clarembaldi Epistola*, ed. N. Häring, *AHDLMA* xxii (1955) 183.

5 *Metalogicon* 15 (ed. Webb, p. 16).

6 The dedication has been newly edited in C. Burnett's ed. of Hermann of Carinthia, *De essentiis* (Leiden–Cologne 1982), pp. 347–9.

7 *Cosmographia* (ed. Dronke), p. 96.

8 Vernet 1955, p. 669.

9 Cf. K. M. Fredborg, 'The Commentary of Thierry of Chartres on Cicero's *De inventione*', *CIMAGL* VII (1971) 225–60. A sentence from his commentary on Priscian also survives: cf. K. M. Fredborg, *ibid.* XXI (1977) 40–3. For traces of Thierry's lectures on Martianus Capella, see E. Jeaneau, *Lectio Philosophorum* (Amsterdam 1973), pp. 14–22.

10 See N. Häring, *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School* (Toronto 1971), pp. 24ff. At the same time, it seems to me highly likely that much of the material in these commentaries was first elaborated earlier, in the decade 1135–45.

of Genesis, the 'Treatise on the works of the six days (*Tractatus de sex dierum operibus*)',¹¹ which has attracted most attention, and brought Thierry most fame, among modern historians of medieval thought.¹² In addition, we have the encyclopaedic collection of his teaching-materials in the *Heptateuchon*, the 'volume of the seven liberal arts', with Thierry's prologue as well as a number of his notes between the texts that were copied. The two large manuscripts, assembling a library of nearly 50 separate works in no fewer than 1170 double-columned pages,¹³ remained unfinished at the time of Thierry's death. He left them to the Chartres cathedral library, together with 3 volumes of legal texts and 45 *volumina librorum* on other subjects¹⁴ – a substantial legacy, especially as many of these 'volumes of books' will likewise have contained more than one work.

1.2 The *Heptateuchon* gives striking practical embodiment to a conception that, as will emerge, is crucial to all Thierry's thought – the unity of knowledge. In his prologue¹⁵ he uses the mythopoeic image from Martianus Capella, of the marriage of Mercury and Philology, to evoke this unity in an individual way. The two principal 'instruments of philosophizing', Thierry says, are understanding and interpretation. The one (*intellectus*) is illuminated by the arts of the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), that offer matter on which the understanding can work; the other (*interpretatio*) aids understanding by providing it with those powers of language that the Trivium inculcates, so that the expression of intellectual insight may be elegant (with grammar's help), rational (with that of dialectic), and well-composed (with that of rhetoric). The marriage of the arts of Quadrivium and Trivium, 'to beget a noble nation of philosophers', thus means the harmonious union of thought and expression, content and form, reality and language.

The seven arts are not studied primarily for their own sakes but as instruments in the service of Philosophia, the love of that wisdom which

¹¹ While Häring 1971, p. 47, suggests reasons for a date 'before May 1140', I believe the later date argued by E. Maccagnolo, *Rerum universitas: Saggio sulla filosofia di Teodorico di Chartres* (Florence 1976), p. 7, is more plausible. For the *Tractatus*, I here follow Häring's choice of title; the titles it is given in various MSS are noted in Häring 1971, p. 555.

¹² A commentary on Boethius' *De institutione arithmetica*, which survives in four MSS and has been claimed for Thierry (cf. G. Beaujouan, *Harvard* 1982, p. 482 n. 84) is – as Charles Burnett kindly informs me – unlikely to be by him.

¹³ On the *Heptateuchon* (MSS Chartres, Bibl. Mun. 497–8) see most recently C. Burnett, 'The Contents and Affiliation of the Scientific Manuscripts Written at, or Brought to, Chartres...', in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. M. Wilks (Oxford 1984), pp. 127–60. Burnett points out (p. 142) that, in MS 498, 104 folios are missing; thus the *Heptateuchon* in Thierry's day will have approached 1400 pages.

¹⁴ Häring 1974, p. 291.

¹⁵ Ed. Jeauneau 1973, pp. 38f.

(here Thierry adopts a Boethian phrase) 'is the integral comprehension of the truth of the things that are (*integra comprehensio veritatis eorum que sunt*)'. The rich materials in the *Heptateuchon* are gathered and interpreted, that is, in order to lead to *sapientia* – to an understanding of the universe and of God that, for Thierry at least, is 'integral' in being inseparably philosophical and theological. Relying on the arts but going beyond them, Thierry in his commentaries on Boethius and Genesis adumbrates a world-picture for some aspects of which, as he shows, philosophical and scientific arguments are appropriate, whilst for other aspects theological arguments are. Yet underlying both Thierry's ranges of argument – indeed fundamental to both – is his deep awareness that most philosophical and theological language cannot but be 'integumental': it is of its nature to intimate, with the help of mythical and metaphorical statement, what the intellect alone cannot fully grasp. Thierry feels the need to rely on *integumenta* as keenly as Plato did in giving his account of the universe in the *Timaeus*. Whether he is using concepts such as nature or the world-soul, or images such as chaos or the Fates, or using arithmetical 'proofs (*probationes*)' to illuminate the paradoxes of the Trinity, Thierry knows that 'these are only hints and guesses, / hints followed by guesses'.

Not only the prologue but much else about the *Heptateuchon* can indicate Thierry's distinctive cast of mind. While it contains few of the rarest specialist texts, translated from the Greek and Arabic, for which Chartres was celebrated,¹⁶ the section devoted to dialectic, for instance, includes the whole of Aristotle's *Organon*, with the exception of the *Posterior Analytics* (though the oldest manuscript of James of Venice's translation of this work was likewise at Chartres). The longest of the epitaphs written for Thierry indeed commemorates him as the first in France to comprehend Aristotle's *Analytics* and *Sophistical Refutations*.¹⁷ The astronomy section includes not only some older tables ascribed to Ptolemy, that were translated from the Greek in late antiquity, but also the Arabic tables of al-Khwārizmī, newly translated by Adelard of Bath and revised perhaps by Hermann of Carinthia. The section on geometry includes a version by Adelard of Euclid's *Elements*, and a pseudo-Boethian *Altercatio* on points of geometry,¹⁸ in which (as we

¹⁶ Cf. P. Dronke, 'New Approaches to the School of Chartres', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* vi (1969 [but publ. 1971]) 117–40, and Burnett 1984.

¹⁷ Vernet 1955, p. 670 ('Primus Analeticos primusque resolvit Helencos, / E Gallis grecas accumulavit opes').

¹⁸ Burnett 1984, pp. 142f. The version of Euclid, known as Adelard II, began on the pages missing today (see n. 13). The *Altercatio* has been critically edited by M. Folkerts, 'Die *Altercatio* in der Geometrie I des Pseudo-Boethius', in *Fachprosa-Studien*, ed. G. Keil (Berlin 1982), pp. 84–114.

shall see) Thierry will have perceived the possibility of making geometrical *probationes* point beyond themselves, to adumbrate another kind of *sapientia*.

When studying the *Heptateuchon* manuscripts – or rather, their photocopies (the originals were burnt, save for some fragments, in 1944) – one is struck by the number of columns and parts of columns that have been left blank between the various treatises. These suggest that Thierry, who included prefatory and transitional notes in diverse places, intended to write many more such notes, but that on his retirement, or his death, this task still remained far from complete. This has a bearing on a point that has recently been set in doubt – whether during his years as chancellor Thierry was actually teaching in Chartres. At all events we can say he was still perfecting his teaching-material. So too, if Häring is right in dating the various versions of Thierry's commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate* to ca. 1148 and shortly thereafter, then these – which survive in the form of lecture-notes and not of a finished treatise – likewise testify to his teaching in the years of his chancellorship. Finally, the fact that in two separate texts of around 1148 Thierry is designated *magister*¹⁹ seems to me to make further scepticism on this score unreasonable.

1.3 We know that Thierry's predecessor, Gilbert of Poitiers, taught while he was Chancellor of Chartres – but that he was teaching a group of only four students.²⁰ Were his classes unpopular because of their difficulty, or were they deliberately exclusive? In the vivacious and mordant autobiographical passages that Thierry includes in his commentary on Cicero's *De inventione*, we see that in his case at least exclusiveness was willed:²¹

I have carried out my resolve to shut out, at my whim, the ignorant mob and the mish-mash of the schools. For those who counterfeit genius, hating study, and those who claim to study at home, pretending to be teachers, and the clowns of scholastic disputation, armed with fistfuls of inane words – such in truth are my camp-followers. But let them stay barred from my palace, these men whom only the aura of my name has brought here, so that in their own regions, in their eagerness for fallacious arguments, they may lie about Thierry!

He is wittily – yet not only wittily – aware of being exceptional in the academic world, aware too of being imitated and rivalled and envied. At

¹⁹ The texts are cited, one by R. Giacone, 'Masters, Books and Library at Chartres', *Vivarium* xii (1974) 30–51, at pp. 38f, the other by Häring 1974, p. 284. Southern's query of the value of the first testimony (1982, p. 130, n. 52) seems overingenious.

²⁰ Dronke 1969, pp. 119–21.

²¹ The citations that follow are translated on the basis of the forthcoming critical ed. of the commentary by K. M. Fredborg (PIMS, Toronto), to whom I am grateful for showing me the relevant pages in typescript.

another moment, Thierry pictures the goddess Envy goading the 'mighty goddess Fame' to slander him because he has scorned her:

Much moved, Fama . . . traversed cities and nations with Invidia as her guide, filling them with rumours, accusing Thierry everywhere, calling him ignominious names. When she speaks to uncultivated and scatterbrained men, she calls him 'a Boeotian, born beneath a heavy sky'.²² When she speaks to religious folk, she calls him a necromancer or a heretic. But among those conscious of the truth she is silent; and if mention is made of him, she changes the subject.

In schools and assemblies of scholars she alters her wares, so as to bring about his shame. She grants him Plato, but in order to take rhetoric away. She allows him rhetoric or grammar, as if for argument's sake, in order to snatch away dialectic – allowing him anything rather than dialectic. She alleges now his immoral life-style, now his negligence in studying, now his long-winded interpretations. Finally, when all else fails, she objects that he lectures to advanced students, so that he holds the younger ones back, or rather, corrupts them in such a way that with him they cannot make any progress.

What emerges from the satire is that, even if he was a controversial figure, Thierry at the time of writing already had a European-wide fame, in an impressive range of subjects – Plato, and all three *artes* of the Trivium, with special emphasis on dialectic. (The passage was doubtless written before he had ventured still further, into theology.) But what Thierry claims is resented most is his exclusiveness, and here, with his final mock-accusation, his implicit self-comparison with Socrates becomes apparent. Like Socrates, Thierry 'corrupts' young men intellectually, he is the gadfly who delights in pricking received truths and in arguing for ideas that seem 'heretical' to the establishment. This passage in my view gives some reason for believing that another Socratic allusion ascribed to Thierry, though recorded in a later source, may also be authentic:

Socrates, as Thierry says, since he was intellectually supreme among philosophers, was so eager in learning that he held it not unworthy of philosophy to learn something of value even from women. That is why he did not blush to call Diotima his teacher.²³

1.4 Thierry's original contributions to medieval philosophy must be sought in seemingly unpromising places: in the various versions of his commentaries on Boethius' theological essays, and in his *Tractatus* on the opening of

²² Thierry's citation of Horace, *Ep.* II 1 244, has a particular edge, in that the person whom Horace here associates with the proverbial obtuseness of Boeotians is none other than Alexander the Great.

²³ Cit. Jeuneau 1973, p. 17, from Walter Burley's *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum* xxx. On the early Christian conceptions of Socrates, see I. Opelt, 'Das Bild des Sokrates in der christlichen lateinischen Literatur', in *Platonismus und Christentum. Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Suppl. x (1983) pp. 192–207.

Genesis. Only this last suggests stylistically a work that was written 'for publication' (even if it survives incomplete and perhaps was never completed): it is polished, with subtle attention to detail, and has few of the didactic mannerisms and repetitions that pervade the Boethian commentaries. The extent to which these represent Thierry's own lecture-notes, or notes taken by disciples, is hard to gauge. I am inclined to follow Häring in his assessment of the three works *de trinitate* – seeing the *Commentum* as the earliest, followed by the *Lectiones* (which look most like a pupil's notes), and by the *Glosa*, the most mature and advanced version of Thierry's discussion.²⁴ It is also the work that, in its frequent moments of great succinctness, comparable in manner to the *Tractatus*, is most likely to contain writing that Thierry had substantially finished and made ready for diffusion. Be that as it may, the difficulty of finding the authentic Thierry in these commentaries should not be exaggerated. As with William of Conches, in whose glosses on Plato and Macrobius almost every manuscript (though consisting of reportage rather than authorial fair copy) constitutes a 'version', bringing some new material of value and implying a degree of revision by William himself, so Thierry too will have recast his lectures frequently, and even if no *one* version represents an authorized text, and we must reckon with occasional intrusive matter, where a reporter has added comments from a different source, it is still possible to perceive clearly the thoughts of an exceptional mind. That in the midst of such commentaries, and under such circumstances of transmission, Thierry was able to elaborate a wholly distinctive *imago mundi*, is itself a striking indication of his powers as innovator.

2.1 While the *Tractatus* has been lauded as the 'first systematic attempt to withdraw cosmology from the realm of the miraculous',²⁵ and seems – at least in its earlier part – daringly to affirm purely physical principles of explanation, the Boethian commentaries appear, by contrast, to present an ultra-Platonic world-view, in which the divine realm and the Ideas are all-important, and physical principles have no place except as a far-off reflection of those Ideas. Are the two tendencies really incompatible? And if not, how does Thierry harmonize them? Central to the discussion of aspects

²⁴ Häring 1971, pp. 19–24. All references to the *Commentum*, *Lectiones*, *Glosa* and *Tractatus* in the notes below are to this edition. I signal explicitly the places where I diverge from Häring in readings or (occasionally, where it affects the sense) punctuation. In the citations below, I have also used the abridged version of the *Lectiones* which Häring (pp. 34ff) calls the *Abbreviatio Monacensis*. This includes Thierry's thoughts on Boethius' *De hebdomadibus* and *Contra Eutychen* as well as on *De trinitate*.

²⁵ R. Klibansky, 'The School of Chartres', in *Twelfth-Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, ed. M. Clagett et al. (Madison 1961), pp. 3–14, at p. 8.

of Thierry's thought that follows is the attempt to suggest answers to these questions.

2.2 For Thierry, both the language men use to speak of God and that which they use to speak of the physical universe are inherently metaphorical and approximative. Concerning speech about God, this had been stated notably by pseudo-Dionysius, and up to a point Thierry's stance can be seen as within the Dionysian tradition:²⁶

... as 'God' is signified in the mode of substance, this word 'God' being used metaphorically (*translative*), so too with other expressions – such as the power of producing and ordering all things, which is called²⁷ his creating ... For all words used of God are spoken metaphorically. For otherwise they are not appropriate to God.

Yet Thierry extends these thoughts in more unusual ways. Both philosophical and religious concepts, he suggests, presuppose a human induction, a perception of the possible basis for the metaphors:

... this name 'God', which was first applied to immortal creatures like angels, to signify their essence, was transferred, by way of a likeness, to intimate the ineffable essence of divinity. So too the names 'Father', 'Son', 'Holy Spirit' were first given to created things. But later they were transferred to God by way of a likeness.

Thierry here assumes that human beings have some direct experience or cognition of 'gods' – that is, of the powers that rule the planets and influence mankind – and that such experience provides the ground for the human metaphor of a supreme, unknowable deity. Nonetheless, he also acknowledges that metaphors for God have something intrinsically relative, even arbitrary, about them:

The divine persons are designated in the masculine gender, though they could be designated by these names: mother, daughter, and gift (*donatio*), like the things they intimate – namely omnipotence, wisdom, and benignity (*omnipotentia, sapientia, benignitas* [all three, like *donatio*, of feminine gender]).²⁸

At the same time, Thierry envisages the highest human capacity of knowing as, in a sense, coinciding with God. Here it can scarcely be ascertained whether in Thierry's thought this is an ultimate instance of relativism – seeing the summit of cognition as a human construct – or whether a claim to objective truth is implied. In the *Lectiones*, Thierry called

²⁶ *Abbr. Mon. Contra Eutych.* 1 51f, III 49f (Häring 1971, pp. 448f, 463).

²⁷ Reading *dicitur* (*dicuntur* Häring).

²⁸ *Glosa* v 22 (p. 297). In the earlier *Commentum* (IV 4, p. 96), however, we read of various reasons why God 'is called father rather than mother, son rather than daughter', including that 'the male sex is the worthier'. It would seem that, by the time he wrote the *Glosa*, Thierry had advanced beyond these more conventional views.

the supreme human capacity both *intelligentia* (like Boethius before him) and *intellectibilitas*. This term, which is his own formation,²⁹ suggests the capacity of being the object of knowledge rather than the knowing subject. In the *Glosa*, Thierry distinguishes between *intelligentia* and a still higher capacity, for which again he uses a term that seems to have passive force – *intelligibilitas* – a capacity of being known more than knowing, or at least one in which the subject and object of knowledge become indistinguishable. (For his definition of *intelligibilitas*, see below, p. 371.) And here the limitations of human metaphor seem for a moment almost overcome. After saying that ‘God is not subject to the motions of reason, and hence is not signified by any name’, Thierry continues:

For, if he were signified by any name, that name . . . would signify intelligibility or the simple motions of intelligibility. So its meaning would not be grasped by all mankind, except by so very few, in that this power of intelligibility belongs only to God and very few human beings.³⁰

The last phrase echoes a famous passage in the Latin *Timaeus*, though there it is a contrast between the active power *intellectus*, which ‘is the property of God and very few chosen human beings’, and *opinio*, which is common to all mankind.³¹ The special force of Thierry’s term *intelligibilitas*, by which he brings together the supreme human construct and the divine object that is constructed, can be seen in other passages, as in a brief aside, on the use of metaphors to intimate the indescribable, in Thierry’s commentary on Boethius’ *De hebdomadibus*:

. . . as a man does not see his own eye, by which he sees everything, so he cannot see or know the supreme light, by which nonetheless he sees and understands whatever he understands.³²

The power to speak of the universe is hedged by the limitations of metaphor as much as is the power to speak of God – but this because the physical world itself is merely image. Here Thierry faithfully follows Plato, though adding a somewhat surprising identification of reason with opinion –

²⁹ My remarks here and below concerning Thierry’s innovations in philosophical language have been verified in the ‘Glossaire du latin philosophique médiéval’ at the Sorbonne. I am particularly grateful to Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny for helping me to consult this precious *fichier*. On the epistemological terms discussed here, P. Michaud-Quantin, ‘La classification des puissances de l’âme au XII^e siècle’, *RMAL* v (1949) 15–34, offers valuable background information, though his remarks on Thierry had to be based, in 1949, on the *Commentum* only. On the Boethian distinction between *intelligibile* and *intellectibile*, see esp. M.-D. Chenu, ‘Imaginatio’, *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati* II (Vatican City 1946) 593–602.

³⁰ *Glosa* IV 8 (p. 286).

³¹ Calcidius, *Timaeus*, ed. J. H. Waszink (2nd ed., London–Leiden 1975), 51e (p. 50).

³² *Abbr. Mon. De hebd.* II 37 (p. 411).

two concepts that Plato himself had carefully distinguished.³³ *Ratio*, for Thierry, cannot attain the height of *intelligentia* (let alone – in the *Glosa* – the even greater height of *intelligibilitas*):

Where image, not truth, is perceived, opinion is at work. But in physics only the image – that is, the embodied form – not the truth, is considered. So there one must use reason, that is, opinion (*ratione, id est opinione*). For reason perceives the image of things and not their truth. It is called reason, in the sense of opinion, from *reor, reris* – which means to opine (*opinari*).³⁴

2.3 To turn now to the content of what Thierry intimates within these limitations of metaphor and image: first and foremost it concerns, as we might expect from one who was both a Christian and a Platonist, the relationship between a divine creator and a created universe. This relationship is defined with the help of many pairs of concepts – God and *Hylê*, necessity and possibility, the changeless and the changing, unity and plurality, among others. But I should like to pause particularly at certain moments that show Thierry’s most distinctive approach. Near the opening of the *Tractatus* we read:

Because the things in the world are mutable and corruptible, it is necessary that they should have an author. Because they have been arranged in a rational way and in a very beautiful order, it is necessary that they should have been created in accordance with wisdom. But because the creator, rationally speaking, is in need of nothing, having perfection and sufficiency in himself, it is necessary that he should create what he does create only through benignity and love.³⁵

Thierry does not give an argument for the existence of this creator, in the sense of proceeding by steps from what is known to what is unknown. Rather, he suggests an intuitive perception, that a universe which is subject to change and decay is not self-sufficient or self-explanatory, and that nothing in the realm of the mutable can ultimately account for its existence, or for the traces of order that, despite mutability, are manifest in it. But for Thierry this is more than a quasi-tautological assertion that mutability presupposes immutability, and visible order an invisible ordering principle. Notwithstanding the repeated ‘it is necessary’, Thierry is offering *probationes* not so much in the sense of ‘proofs’ as in that of ‘examinations’: he is examining the relationships between his pairs of terms, in the hope that this will illuminate the underlying intuition, which is never itself analysed discursively. Here, indeed, his language evokes something that goes beyond

³³ Thus, in the passage cited above (n. 31), *intellectus* is *semper cum ratione vera*, and *opinio* is *sine ulla ratione*.

³⁴ *Lectio* II 29 (p. 164).

³⁵ *Tractatus* 2 (pp. 555f).

any traditional argument from design, or from contingency, for the existence of God; for what Thierry is intimating is that considering the nature of the universe leads to conceiving its creator along the lines of the Christian Trinity: not only as begetter (i.e. Father), but as the manifestation of wisdom (Son) and of benignity or love (Spirit); he links these three modes of looking at the creator, moreover, with the – ultimately Aristotelian – concepts of, respectively, the efficient, the formal, and the final cause.³⁶

2.4 In the *Lectiones* and *Glosa*, Thierry examines a different range of concepts regarding the creator and the universe. Here his originality of approach is especially apparent. In the earlier work, after distinguishing speculative philosophy from ethics and logic, and dividing the speculative (like Boethius) into theology, mathematics, and physics, Thierry introduces three terms – simplicity, enfolding, and unfolding (*simplicitas*, *complicatio*, *explicatio*) – to show how the universe (*rerum universitas*) can be the subject of all three branches of speculative thought. The expressions *complicatio* and *explicatio rerum universitatis* are Thierry's innovations.

In its simplicity, the universe is the subject of theology. For it is 'enfolded in a certain simplicity (*complicata in quadam simplicitate*)', which is God. God, however, not only enfolds the universe but unfolds it (*explicat*), and here we pass from theology to mathematics (*mathematica*), for the unfolding of the universe shows how 'the divine unity gives rise to plurality':

Plurality is the unfolding of unity, unity the principle and origin of plurality. For all otherness descends from unity . . . The unfolding of that enfolding is all things that were, that shall be and that are.

Yet a *mathematicus*, from the ninth century to the twelfth, is an astrologer even more than a mathematician. And, as the unfolding that he studies is an ordered, not a random one, he is *ipso facto* studying 'what the ancients called fate. For fate is the unfolding of divine providence, and divine providence is God himself.' Finally, 'the same universe is the subject of physics in yet another mode – namely, as it is in actuality (*ut in actu est*) . . . For physics considers the four corporeal elements themselves, as they are in actuality.'³⁷

Thierry's argument becomes more complex, and wholly unprecedented, in what follows. The universe is studied speculatively in three modes; but 'it exists in four modes':

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 'Si quis igitur subtiliter consideret mundi fabricam, efficientem ipsius causam deum esse cognoscat, formalem vero dei sapientiam, finalem eiusdem benignitatem . . .'

³⁷ *Lectiones* II 4–6 (pp. 155f). In the last sentence cited, I read *quatuor elementa corporea ipsa* (*corpora Häring*). On the terms *mathematicus* and *mathematica* in medieval Latin, see *Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis*, s.v. *mathematicus*.

One and the same universe exists in absolute necessity, in necessity of make-up (*complexionis*), in absolute possibility, and in determinate possibility . . .

It exists in absolute necessity in a certain simplicity and union of all things, which is God. It exists in necessity of make-up in a certain order and progression – but immutably. It exists in absolute possibility – that is, in possibility only, without any actuality. And it exists in determinate possibility – both possibly and actually.

Absolute necessity is the enfolding of all things in simplicity. Necessity of make-up is their unfolding in a certain order (which the physicists call fate). Absolute possibility is the enfolding of that same universe in that pure possibility from which all things come to actuality (which the physicists call primordial matter or chaos). Determinate possibility is the unfolding of absolute possibility in actuality, with possibility remaining.³⁸

Once more all four expressions – *necessitas absoluta*, *necessitas complexionis*, *possibilitas absoluta*, and *possibilitas determinata* – are of Thierry's own devising.³⁹ His conception of these four modes of existence of the universe is enriched in the *Glosa*. Absolute necessity is now also called unity and eternity and 'form of forms (*forma formarum*)' – since for Thierry, as for Boethius, 'form is the source of being (*ex forma enim esse*)' and 'being exists through participation in unity (*est enim esse ex unitatis participatione*)'.⁴⁰ Necessity of make-up is here linked with the unfolding of the universe 'into the truths of forms and images, which we call Ideas', and into the patterns of causality:⁴¹

Simplicity arranges these Ideas in a certain order, into the series of causes, which of necessity is as it is. For a thing follows⁴² that series once it has come to be governed by a particular cause. And this is called determinate necessity, or necessity of make-up, in that, when we consider a particular material expression of it, we cannot avoid the rest of its series of causal connexions.

³⁸ *Lectiones* II 9f (pp. 157f).

³⁹ *Necessitas absoluta* also occurs (under Thierry's influence?) in a theological context in a twelfth-century MS (Vat. Reg. Lat. 135, fol. 99r), where it is contrasted with *necessitas implicita* and *necessitas vehemens* (see A. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik* I. 1 (Regensburg 1952), p. 113 n. 69 – where, however, *Alia, dum res manet* should be corrected to *Absoluta, dum res manet*).

It is difficult to know the precise connotations of *complexio* in Thierry's *necessitas complexionis*. Of the senses given in *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. 'Verflechtung' (I A 2 b), 'Zusammenhang' (I A 2 d) and 'Gefüge' (I B) among the general meanings, 'Beschaffenheit (des Körpers)' (II C 1) and '(körperliche) Verfassung' (II C 2) among the medical meanings, could all be relevant.

⁴⁰ *Glosa* II 15f (p. 272). Häring 1971, p. 410, cites Augustine, *Sermon* 117, where God is *forma . . . omnium formatorum*, adding that 'the expression *forma formarum* was apparently coined by Thierry'. But here Thierry was preceded by Gerbert, *De rationali* XI (ed. A. Olleris, Clermont-Ferrand-Paris 1867, p. 305): 'Substantiales quippe differentiae, itemque species et genera, semper sunt. Alia sunt quidem rerum formae, vel, ut ita dixerim, formae formarum; alia sunt actus; alia sunt quaedam potestates.' Gerbert's *ut ita dixerim* strongly suggests he was introducing the expression.

⁴¹ *Glosa* II 20ff (p. 273).

⁴² Reading *sequitur* (*sequuntur* Häring).

With his exceptional gift for synthesis, bringing together concepts from the most disparate ranges of literature and thought, Thierry goes on to say of this necessity of make-up: 'some have called it natural law (*legem naturalem*), others Natura, others the world-soul . . . others Eimarmenê, yet others again have called it fate, others the Fates (*Parcae*), others the divine intelligence'. The last concept here is theological, the rest are mythographic, Platonic, or (in the case of *lex naturalis* and *Eimarmenê*) Stoic and Hermetic.⁴³ Thierry suggests, however, that underlying all these terms is a particular way of looking at the universe, as subject to, and the product of, immutable principles.

So, too, there are many names that correspond to the notion of absolute possibility:

This, then, is the primordial matter which some have called Hylê, others Silva, others chaos, others the underworld, others aptitude and neediness . . .⁴⁴

Again Thierry suggests that the Platonic and Aristotelian expressions familiar through Calcidius (*chaos*, *Hylê*, *Silva*, *caentia*),⁴⁵ the Boethian *aptitudo*, and the *infernus* that is both pagan underworld and Christian hell, are so many approximations to his own philosophical construct.

2.5 Corresponding to the four modes of existence of the universe he envisages the four modes of human knowledge. In the *Glosa* Thierry, like Boethius, sees sense-perception, imagination, reason, and intelligence hierarchically,⁴⁶ each attaining a greater degree of abstraction from the corporeal and coming closer to the perception of pure forms. Like Boethius too, Thierry sees each of the higher powers 'as it were reigning over' those below it, relying on and subsuming the information that they provide. Thus imagination gathers up sense-data, as reason does images, and intelligence those forms (still 'with little abstracting of mutability') with which reason furnishes it.

But the concept 'intelligibility (*intelligibilitas*)', the faculty Thierry sees as higher than Boethius' *intelligentia*, is his own contribution:⁴⁷

⁴³ Thierry knew *Eimarmenê* from *Asclepius* 19 (ed. Nock-Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* II 319): 'The seven spheres, as they are called, have as their Ousiarchs or chiefs that which men call fortune and *Eimarmenê*, through which all things are transformed by natural law (*lege naturae*) and varied by perpetual movement within an absolutely firm order.' It is noteworthy that already in this passage *Eimarmenê* is related to *lex naturae*. On the Stoic origins of both concepts, see Ch. 3, pp. 99, 103, 112.

⁴⁴ *Glosa* II 18 (p. 272).

⁴⁵ Cf. Calcidius 1975, p. 167. 6 ('chaos, quam Graeci hylen, nos silvam vocamus'); on *silva* and *caentia*, in the context of Aristotle's *Physics* 192a, see *ibid.* pp. 289-93.

⁴⁶ *Glosa* II 3ff (pp. 269f); cf. Boethius, *Cons. Phil.* v pr. 4. Thierry here also uses *disciplina* as a synonym for *intelligentia*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* II 8 (p. 270).

. . . it is the power of the soul that removes from the forms all those limits that make them distinct, contemplating what remains of them only as existence (*esse*) and essence (*entia*);⁴⁸ thereby the soul frightens away all plurality, and beholds the simple union of all unions – just as, if you were to take away the limit of being-a-circle from the circle, and the limit of being-human from humanity, only the essence (*entia*) of these remains – and this, containing all things in itself, is the simple simplicity enfolding all, and the simple whole.

This supreme power of cognition (which, as we noted, only a few human beings share with God) is what we need in order to consider absolute necessity. On the other hand, intelligence considers the necessity of make-up; and reason (or opinion), along with imagination and sense-perception, considers both determinate and absolute possibility. For, in speculative science, both these modes – the universe as it is, and as it came to be – are the domain of the physicist; just as the necessity of make-up is the domain of the mathematician-astrologer, and absolute necessity that of the theologian.

Fundamental to Thierry's epistemology is the congruence between the modes of knowledge of the human soul and the modes of existence of the universe. Again the question arises: is it an objective correspondence, a 'pre-established harmony', or are the modes of existence, in the last resort, only a metaphor projected by the soul in its effort at understanding? One passage at least in the *Lectiones* suggests this. There Thierry alludes to one of the most enigmatic moments in Plato's *Timaeus*: 'the soul, as Plato says, is composed of undivided and divided substance, and of the same and the different nature'.⁴⁹ Where Plato meant this of the world-soul, and William of Conches made a brilliant attempt to account for Plato's fourfold distinction in terms of the world-soul,⁵⁰ Thierry boldly disregards the question of Plato's literal meaning and makes of the distinctions a statement about human knowledge, about the four powers, by means of which the human

⁴⁸ Thierry uses *entia* as a feminine singular noun: Häring lists fourteen occasions in his *Index* (p. 604). The term appears to be a coinage of Abelard's, *Theologia Christiana* IV (ed. Cousin II 549). Cousin's speculation – 'forte legendum *essentiam*' – is groundless, both because of the confirmation of the word in Thierry's writings and because of its confirmation in Abelard's own sentence, by the complementary coinage *entialiter*: 'res omnino recte dici non possit, quae in se veram non habet entiam, ut sit in se una res numero a ceteris omnibus, quae ipsa non sunt, rebus entialiter discreta'. Unfortunately E. M. Buytaert in his new edition (CC CM XII 343, 2468f) has substituted the *lectiones faciliores*, *essentia* and *essentialiter*, relegating *entia* and *entialiter* to the apparatus.

On the other hand, Thierry's two terms signifying 'state of being' – *entitas* and *onitas* – were apparently his own inventions. (For their occurrences, see Häring's *Index*, pp. 604, 613). *Onitas* was formed with Greek *ὄν* in mind: a relation with *anitas* (the later twelfth-century formation, from Arabic *anniyya*, on which see M.-T. d'Alverny, 'Anniyya-Anitas', *Mélanges Etienne Gilson* (Toronto-Paris 1959), pp. 59-91) seems unlikely.

⁴⁹ *Timaeus* 35A (Calcidius 1975, p. 27).

⁵⁰ *Glosae super Platonem*, ed. E. Jeuneau (Paris 1965), pp. 152f.

mind comprehends the four modes – understanding 'undivided substance, namely divinity, that is, the universe in its simplicity; ... divided substance, namely absolute possibility; ... the nature of the same – that is, the universe in the necessity of its make-up, which is undivided and immutable; ... and the nature of the different, in determinate possibility'.⁵¹

In the *Glosa* it is not so much the powers as the movements of the soul that Thierry stresses, movements which, as the soul comprehends the universe in its different modes, correspond to the divine unfolding (*explicatio*) and unfolding (*complicatio*):

The soul is proportioned to the nature of the universe. For now as it were she unfolds herself, now gathers herself into a certain simplicity, as when she is intelligibility. When she is brought down from that, she dilates herself, evolving what she had enfolded.⁵²

This correspondence with the divine activity, according to Thierry, extends also to the human mind's creative aspect. If the divine mind is *forma formarum*, the human is 'the form of artistic forms (*forma artificialium specierum*)':

God is the form of forms, because, when only the possible lay waiting in advance, he, conceiving forms in relation to that possible, generated a certain perfection of actuality (*actus*), whose form exists because he gave it being.

This can be seen similarly in the soul of man. For the human mind conceives a form and the composition of some object of art, forming what is in the mind before linking it to matter, but taking account of matter. For the mind could not beget any exemplary figure if there were absolutely no matter.

Thus the human mind is the form of artistic forms. For between it and matter lies only the artistic form which, subsisting as something possible, through being adjoined to matter turns into an object of art.⁵³

2.6 What is true of artistic creation is equally so for Thierry of verbal creation. In particular, he sees the human naming of things as creative, as not merely imitating but reproducing a primordial divine act that consisted inseparably of creating and naming. Here we encounter the most extreme aspect of Thierry's Platonism. Boethius (*De trinitate* II) had said 'All being (*esse*) comes from form. For a statue is called (*dicitur*) the likeness of a living being not on account of its bronze, which is matter, but on account of the form by which the likeness is impressed on it.' Thierry, commenting on this,

says something much more unusual. For him all being stems inseparably from form and name (*vocabulum*). He praises Boethius' subtlety in using the expression 'is called (*dicitur*)', but only to invest it with a meaning Boethius could never have foreseen:⁵⁴

Form and name accompany each other. The form cannot exist without the name. From the same source as each thing has its form, it also has its name. Otherwise it could not exist.⁵⁵ Names indeed give things their being (*Nomina quippe essentiant res* [*essentiare* is yet another of Thierry's new formations]). Something is a man because it is called 'man', an animal because it is called 'animal'. And so with the rest ... For the names were united in the divine mind from eternity even before the imposing of them by human beings. Later man imposed them on the things with which they were united in the divine mind.

Thus in the end Thierry does not see the necessary human reliance on metaphor and image negatively: he is convinced that the human mind can penetrate the world of forms in the divine mind, that human language, for all its approximateness, is not a random groping for words but can reach the true reality of the names as they are, as they give rise to forms. In the *Glosa* Thierry, in one of his characteristic passages of daring synthesis, summons testimonies to this which range from the grammarian Priscian to Moses (as the reputed author of Genesis), to Cicero and his commentator Victorinus, Boethius and the Church Fathers, and at last to the theological confirmation of the unity of name and form in the Logos: 'Once did God speak'. Priscian, Thierry begins, glosses 'the things that exist' by '[the things] that fall beneath a particular name'; and he continues:

In the same way Moses says: 'he called the light day and the darkness night' ... as if to say, he united the names to the realities, in such a way that the realities themselves exist on account of the names. For a thing exists in virtue of God's naming. Otherwise God's providence would be in error [i.e. if God had conceived a name to which no reality corresponded].

Boethius too confirms this union, saying: each thing is called that which pleased him who first imposed names on things. So biblical commentators affirm that Adam imposed names on things through the Holy Spirit – for only in this way, not otherwise, could he have discerned the primordial unity of names and forms. It is in accordance with this that Cicero, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, calls him the happiest and most blessed who first imposed names on things.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Lectioes* II 52f (pp. 172f).

⁵⁵ Reading *res non posset esse* (*esse non posset esse* Häring).

⁵⁶ *Glosa* II 41f (pp. 277f). Cf. also P. Dronke, 'La creazione degli animali', *Settimane di Studio* XXXI (1985) 809–48, at pp. 811f; J. Jolivet, 'Quelques cas de "platonisme grammatical" du VIIe au XIIe siècle', in *Mélanges René Crozet* (2 vols., Poitiers 1966) I 93–9; M.-D. Chenu, 'Un cas de platonisme grammatical au XIIe siècle', *RSPT* II (1967) 666–8.

⁵¹ *Lectioes* II 30f (pp. 164f). In the *Lectioes*, as was mentioned above, Thierry still identifies the highest power of the soul with Boethius' *intelligentia* (for which he likewise uses the term *intellectibilitas*).

⁵² *Glosa* II 12 (p. 271).

⁵³ *Ibid.* II 33f (pp. 275f).

3.1 If the human mind, like the universe in the divine mind, both unfolds itself and gathers itself into *simplicitas*, does this not suggest the intended unity and complementarity of the two seemingly so disparate parts of Thierry's *Tractatus* on the six days of creation? In the so-called empirical or naturalistic part he shows the unfolding, from absolute possibility to determinate possibility. Then, in the incomplete later part, he considers the enfolded *simplicitas*.

Again, if forms and names are conjoined in the way Thierry believes, can we not say that the *Tractatus* is concerned with *explicatio* in two senses – the 'unfolding' of the universe, and the 'explication' of that unfolding in human language? Thierry's verbal explication imitates the cosmogonic unfolding, just as the human artist imitates the divine one. And, as on the divine plane there are two 'poles' of creation – absolute necessity and absolute possibility – so the human explicator, Thierry, will have planned to consider creation from both these poles. Plato began his account in the *Timaeus* from the upper pole, the design of the Demiurgos, and then completed this with an account that took its departure from the lower pole, *Hylê*, the 'nurse and receptacle of becoming'.⁵⁷ Thierry, after a brief initial acknowledgment of the upper pole, proceeds with a detailed account that begins from the lower, and concludes the extant part of his work with a theological excursus that considers the creator in himself. The further cosmological account, of the descent from absolute necessity – Thierry's counterpart to the first section of the *Timaeus* – will also have been included in his overall design, even if this part is lost or was never completed.

3.2 Near the beginning of the *Tractatus*, the passage (cited above p. 367) in which Thierry infers from the nature of the universe a creator who orders in accordance with wisdom and love continues: 'Because all ordering is brought to unordered things, it was necessary that something unordered should precede.' What preceded, which in other contexts Thierry calls absolute possibility, primordial matter, chaos, or *Hylê*, is here said to be the four elements, the 'material cause' of the universe. But though the elements preceded the formed universe, Thierry stresses that they are not eternal: 'the creator himself created them in the beginning out of nothing'.

Thereby Thierry was trying, like Boethius before him, to guard against the notion (which for a Christian was fraught with Manichaean implications) that the material world is 'coeternal (*coeterna*)' with God. Yet Thierry did not accept Boethius' resolution of this point near the close of his *Consolation of Philosophy*, where Boethius had argued that, whilst God is eternal, the world

⁵⁷ *Timaeus* 49A (Calcidius 1975, p. 46).

is perpetual⁵⁸ – not self-sufficient in its own eternity, hence not on a par with God, but eternally dependent on God for its existence. Perhaps this Boethian conception – though clearly compatible with belief in a divine creator – was too daring for the orthodoxy of twelfth-century theologians⁵⁹ (and indeed in Boethius' day it was rejected by his Christian Neoplatonist colleagues, Zacharias and Philoponus).⁶⁰ At the same time, both Platonic and Aristotelian cosmology seemed to presuppose divine and physical principles of creation collaborating from the outset, as did the Hermetic cosmology (preserved in the *Asclepius*) from which Thierry himself cites the key phrase: 'There was God and *Hylê*.'⁶¹ For Thierry's friend and admirer Bernard Silvestris, in the *Cosmographia*, it was possible to develop this phrase, and to see primordial matter (personified as *Silva*) as itself a theophany and a protagonist in the labour of creation.⁶² But there the evidently 'integumental' nature of the account afforded a certain safeguard. The nearest Thierry came to Bernard's *Silva* or Boethius' perpetual world was in a passage in the *Glosa* (II 32), where he says that, when God conceived the forms of all things, matter lay waiting in advance (*preiacente materia*), and adds, to characterize the relation between mutable matter and immutable creator: 'though mutability was created by immutability, immutability did not precede it in time'.

In the *Tractatus*, by contrast, 'God created matter in the first moment of time' (5). Thierry here preferred to make a clear obeisance to the – still basically Augustinian – orthodoxy of his day. But this gave him far greater freedom of manoeuvre in all that followed. From the instant of the divine creation of matter onwards, Thierry sees nature as autonomous: everything unfolds 'naturally (*naturaliter*)', as 'the natural order demanded (*ordo naturalis exigebat*)'.

Historically perhaps the most astonishing aspect of Thierry's conception of natural unfolding is that of animate from inanimate: Thierry sees the emergence of animal and human life as part of the material process. Where even a thinker as audacious as William of Conches had felt obliged to accept the Augustinian notion that for mankind 'God creates new souls each day'⁶³

⁵⁸ *Cons. Phil.* v pr. 6.

⁵⁹ Cf. Dronke 1969, pp. 137–9.

⁶⁰ Cf. P. Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris 1967), p. 229.

⁶¹ *Asclepius* 14 (ed. Nock–Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* II 313), cit. *Tractatus* 26. The *Asclepius*, composed in Greek probably in the third century AD and translated into Latin in the fourth, was thought in the Middle Ages and Renaissance to be by a sage, Hermes, who was more ancient than Plato. See also below, p. 379.

⁶² Cf. *Cosmographia* (ed. Dronke), pp. 29–31.

⁶³ *Philosophia* IV 51 (ed. G. Maurach (Pretoria 1980), pp. 112, 228 n. 200).

– conceding, that is, that the natural order is not sufficient to account for the emergence of human souls, each of which presupposes a direct divine intervention in nature – Thierry, having secured the divine beginning for *explicatio* as a whole, felt free to develop the idea of *explicatio* with full consistency.

At the opening of the *Tractatus*, in a passage that, I would suggest, is closely modelled on one in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*,⁶⁴ Thierry promises to expound the account of creation in Genesis 'in accordance with physics and literally (*secundum phisicam et ad litteram*)', leaving allegorical and moral reading wholly aside, 'for this has clearly been accomplished by the holy Fathers'. What, then, is the physical meaning for Thierry of the 'work of the six days'?

3.3 A day, he says, is literally the space of time of one complete rotation of the highest heaven (the outer sphere known in later Scholastic thought as the *Primum Mobile*). This rotation began in the first moment of time, because the heaven, consisting of the element fire, is of such lightness that it cannot stay still; again, since it encompasses everything else, it cannot move forward from one place to another, and hence cannot but rotate (5).

In its first rotation this fire lit up the air below it –

But when the air was lit by the power of the highest element, it followed naturally that, through the mediating illumination of the air, fire would warm the third element, water, and, warming it, would suspend it in the form of vapour above the air. For it is the nature of heat to divide water into the minutest drops and to lift these above the air by the power of its motion – as is apparent in the smoke of a steam-bath, just as it is manifest in the clouds of the sky . . .

Thus it happened that the second element, air, was midway between flowing water and water suspended as vapour. And this is what Moses says in the words 'And he placed the firmament in the middle of the waters' . . . And the space of time of that rotation was called 'second day'.

(7–8)

⁶⁴ Compare:

Periphyseon 693B–C:

(A.) 'De operibus sex primorum dierum, quoniam multi et grece et latine multa exposuere, . . . nunc disputandum est . . .' (N.) 'Ac prius dicendum quod de allegoricis intellectibus moralium interpretationum nulla nunc nobis intentio est, sed de sola rerum facturarum creatione secundum historiam pauca disserere . . .' (A.) 'Satis enim a sanctis patribus de talium allegoria est actum.'

Tractatus 1:

'De septem diebus et sex operum distinctionibus primam Geneseos partem secundum phisicam et ad litteram ego expositurus, inprimis de intentione auctoris et de libri utilitate pauca premittam. Postea vero ad sensum littere hystorialem exponendum veniam, ut et allegoricam et moralem lectionem, que a sanctis doctoribus aperte execute sunt, ex toto pretermittam.'

The remarkable thing about this passage is less that Thierry supports his physical interpretation of Moses' statement by an empirical analogy (the wording indeed suggests that his 'observation' also owes something to Cicero),⁶⁵ than that he tries to show that the notion of waters above the firmament – which William of Conches had argued was a scientific impossibility – is scientifically not merely acceptable but necessary: that it is in conformity with physical laws. William had mocked the fundamentalists of his day, who accepted the existence of such waters as a miraculous divine contravention of the laws of nature; Thierry is insisting, by contrast, that what Moses gives at the opening of Genesis is not an account of creation as miracle but an account of the emergence of the universe which is soundly based on physical laws. Admittedly Moses expressed himself in oracular utterances, that have to be scrutinized carefully for their literal meaning. And it needs a physicist to elucidate that meaning accurately.

Each of the next four rotations of the *Primum Mobile* entails, naturally and necessarily, certain physical effects that correspond to what Moses evoked in his 'days' of creation. And (even if one might take it to be otherwise from Moses' obscure text!) none of these effects presupposes any specific divine intervention in the natural processes, for these themselves result, step by step, in the emergence of plant life, marine and other animal life, and human life:

When the water was suspended above the air in the form of vapour, the natural order of things demanded that, since the flowing water below had been diminished, earth would appear, not continuously, but as it were in the manner of islands. This can be shown in many ways. For, the more the steam rises from a steam-bath, the more the water in the bath is diminished . . .

In that same rotation [Moses' 'third day'] it happened that – through the warmth of the upper air mingled with the moisture in the earth . . . – the earth conceived the power of producing herbs and trees. This power proceeds naturally from the warmth of heaven into the newly-bared moist earth . . .

But if the firmament by now contained enough warmth to contract the flowing water below, it naturally happened that, from the multitude of waters drawn together to the firmament through the warmth of the third day, the bodies of stars were created.

(9–10)

Thierry goes on to prove that stellar bodies are in fact composed of water, and then relates this emergence of stars to the fourth rotation or day. But in the fifth, the warmth generated by the motion of the stars became a

⁶⁵ *De natura deorum* II x 27 (cf. Dronke 1969, p. 133 n. 51).

'life-giving warmth (*calor vitalis*)' – this Stoic phrase, which Thierry knew through Cicero,⁶⁶ probably also having for him the Neoplatonic astrological connotations by which the stars are causes of life on earth:

... the warmth coming from their motion, increasing and proceeding to a life-giving warmth, first came to rest on the waters, that is, on the element higher than earth. And thereby the living beings of the water and the birds were created ...

But through the mediation of moisture that life-giving warmth naturally reached earth, and thereby the living beings of the earth were created, in whose number man was made to the image and likeness of God.⁶⁷ And the space of time of this sixth rotation was called 'sixth day'. (14)

Thierry then tries to show that there could be no new modes of creation beyond those he has outlined (and that this is what Moses really meant by his declaration, 'The Lord rested on the seventh day!') Everything that emerges thereafter is produced through some of the modes already described, and 'through the seminal causes [that is, powers of bringing forth new life] which God inserted in the elements'.

These 'seminal causes' are characterized in one of Thierry's most unusual insights (though again a certain Stoic influence is perceptible):⁶⁸

Fire is wholly active, earth wholly passive. So fire is as it were the artificer and efficient cause, and earth, underlying, is as it were the material cause; the two elements between them are as it were an instrument or binding power by which the activity of the highest is transmitted to those below. (17)

For Thierry, that is, there is a mimesis of divine creation on the elemental level – where fire is the artist working upon his material – just as there is on the human, when the artist's mind conceives forms.

3.4 At this point Thierry proceeds to a more detailed 'literal exposition' of the opening of Genesis. Yet he remains as far as ever from the traditional works of this kind. Explaining the words 'heaven and earth' in verse 1 enables him to propound (to borrow Jauneau's telling phrase) 'a kinetic theory of bodies'.⁶⁹ The elements, he argues, can be transmuted into one another because they consist of particles of the same kind but of greater or lesser compression – they are most closely compacted in earth, most lightly

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* II ix-x 23-7 (esp. 27 *ad fin.*, of *ignis*): 'Iam vero reliqua quarta pars mundi: ea et ipsa tota natura fervida est et ceteris naturis omnibus salutarem inpartit et vitalem calorem.'

⁶⁷ Haring (*Tractatus*, p. 561) attempts to separate the making of man from that of the *animalia terre* by setting a full stop before the phrase 'in quorum numero homo ad imaginem et similitudinem dei factus est', which he construes as a separate sentence. But syntactically this is not possible: lacking a finite verb, the phrase can only qualify the preceding words, *animalia terre*.

⁶⁸ Cf. Dronke 1969, p. 135 n 56.

⁶⁹ Jauneau 1973, p. 9.

in fire. There is a reciprocity by which the lighter elements and the heavier make one another what they are: the looser assemblage of particles in fire and air is more agile and mobile, and, by imprisoning the denser assemblages of water and earth, makes these more solid and corpulent, while fire and air, if they are not to disperse completely, need something solid to lean upon. The mobility of the lighter elements both causes and presupposes the fixity of the heavier ones.

According to Thierry, Moses, in his enigmatic sayings, showed himself well aware of the nature of the elements; yet his words are at times susceptible of more than one literal construction. What did he mean, for instance, by 'darkness on the face of the abyss'? Thierry first takes it as a description of water alone, in its unformed state, and adds that, 'according to some', the spirit borne over the waters is air, 'which because of its subtlety in some sense approaches the tenuousness of the divine Spirit' (22). But then he gives an alternative reading of his own, which he prefers: the darkness was air, still unformed, looming like tenebrous mist over an abyss that was a chaotic mire of earth and water intermingled. And the spirit borne over the waters was 'the power of the artificer', working upon matter and ordering it.

Here Thierry is no longer thinking of the *artifex* fire, but of 'the operative power of the [divine] creator'. He lets us glimpse another aspect of his cosmology, the universe in the mode of its 'necessity of make-up'. And, still more than in the *Glosa*, he stresses that the shaping, life-giving principle works upon matter not from above but from within. For this immanent principle, to characterize which Thierry in the *Glosa* brings together a range of concepts and images extending from natural law to world-soul, he now considers the particular aptness of the concept 'spirit'. In his most dazzling demonstration that the great thinkers of the past were, however different their approaches, pointing to the same cosmological truths, Thierry finds the moving power inherent in the universe understood as spirit by the pagan philosophers, Hermes (whose testament, *Asclepius*, was deemed to be a work of immense antiquity), Plato, and Vergil (the inspired *vates* who speaks of 'the spirit within'), just as it is by the biblical prophets, Moses, David, and Solomon. And it is this same power, Thierry concludes triumphantly, that Christians call 'the Holy Spirit'.⁷⁰

3.5 Then, before resuming his elaborate literal explanation of the verses in Genesis, from the creation of light onwards, Thierry decides to insert a

⁷⁰ *Tractatus* 26f (pp. 566f). In the case of David, the term *spiritus* comes not in the words (from Psalm 32: 6) cited by Thierry, but in their continuation: 'et spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum'.

theological digression (*ex vera et sancta theologia sumptum*: 29) on the Logos and the Holy Spirit. The extant *Tractatus* breaks off near the beginning of this digression, in which Thierry promises four kinds of reasoning 'that lead man to cognition of the creator – *probationes* of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy'. Only the first kind are in fact broached, and themselves remain incomplete. These *probationes*, as Jeuneau observed, proceed *rationabiliter* (30) in a sense somewhat similar to that implied in Anselm's arguments concerning the existence and nature of God.⁷¹ They do not exist autonomously, but in relation to definitions which the author takes as points of departure, and which he tries to make evident by way of the examination (*probatio* in its other sense) of related concepts, the aptness of which to the divine context the reader is intended to perceive. Thierry takes as his basis a dictum of Augustine's about the Trinity: 'In the Father there is unity, in the Son equality, in the Holy Spirit the concord of unity and equality.'⁷² From this Thierry develops a series of *integumenta*, treating the concept 'unity' in particular in a wide-ranging metaphorical fashion in order to illuminate both the Christian Trinity and the relations between God and the cosmos.

These *integumenta* move too far into purely theological discourse to consider in detail here. Yet something of their intellectual daring and elegance can be conveyed even by a brief quotation. As Thierry, like Boethius, held that in each thing its existence is inseparable from its unity, he saw *unitas* as an apt name for the divine *forma formarum*. And he was the first, to my knowledge, to use the two ways in which *unitas* can be said to 'generate' numbers as an image of the cosmogonic and the trinitarian process. Unity, multiplied by other numbers, engenders the entire series of whole numbers –

... but numbers are infinite, so it is necessary that unity should have no limit to its power. Unity therefore is omnipotent in the creation of numbers. But the creation of numbers is the creation of realities (*rerum*).⁷³ So unity is omnipotent in the creation of realities ... So unity is necessarily deity.

On the other hand, unity can be multiplied by itself, and then the result is again unity ($1 \times 1 = 1$):

For unity multiplied by one is nothing other than unity. So the begetting one and the begotten one are one and the same substance, since each of them is true unity. For unity can beget nothing other than the equality of that same unity. (38–9)

⁷¹ Jeuneau 1973, pp. 95f.

⁷² *De doctrina Christiana* 15.

⁷³ Thierry probably implies in this – his most often cited phrase – not only the Platonic claim that numbers are real, like forms, but also the (ultimately Pythagorean) one, that each thing is as it is by virtue of its proportioning. Some aspects of the background and the *Nachleben* of

The *Tractatus* breaks off before Thierry's *integumentum* for the Holy Spirit, seen as the 'binding (*connexio*)' of equality and unity,⁷⁴ but we can reconstruct it with the help of moments in his Boethian commentaries. The equation $1 \times 1 = 1$, we might say, can be read in two ways: in the first, just cited, the Father, multiplying himself, brings forth the Son, who is equal to himself. But if we read it another way, we can say that the equality here affirmed proceeds (like the Spirit) from both the terms on the lefthand side of the equation, and is equal to both these terms.

3.6 So, too, we can reconstruct at least approximately some of the ways in which Thierry might have gone on to use *probationes* from music, geometry, and astronomy to 'lead man to cognition of the creator'. In the case of geometry, consider a passage such as this in the pseudo-Boethian *Altercatio* on geometry, that was copied in the *Heptateuchon*:

Certainly you can see how great is the power of the point. For the line begins from the point, the figure is completed by it. Indeed we see that no rectilinear figure can come into existence unless the angle is closed by the point. Moreover, wherever a line can be intersected, it is intersected through the point, though the point itself admits absolutely no intersection in itself. No line is joined to any other line except through the point. Finally, since reason shows us that the figure formed by a circle is to be preferred to all other plane figures, because of its equality, what is the principle of that evenness if not the point set at the circle's centre?⁷⁵

Thierry's phrase are discussed by F. Brunner, 'Creatio numerorum, rerum est creatio', in *Mélanges Crozet* (n. 56) II 719–25.

⁷⁴ In two of the seven MSS that preserve Thierry's treatise complete as far as here (Häring 1971, pp. 48ff), it is preceded by a letter and followed by a *tractatulus* by his disciple Clarembald. These were printed together with Thierry's work by Häring in *AHDLMA* xxii 183 (letter) and 200–16 (*tractatulus*), and separately in Häring's *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras* (Toronto 1965), pp. 225–49. Clarembald repeats a number of Thierry's detailed insights regarding the natural unfolding of the universe, but does not fully grasp Thierry's underlying *principles* of natural explanation. Instead, he mingles sentences drawn from Thierry with sentences drawn from St Augustine, seemingly unaware of the vast difference in orientation between the two writers on Genesis, so that the *tractatulus*, though assembling some valuable materials, uses them for little more than a banal essay in Christian apologetics. That Southern (1979, p. 32) could describe Thierry's *Tractatus* as 'a somewhat confused and repetitive commentary on Genesis, indistinguishable (so far as I can see) in style and method from that part of the work [*sic*] which was written by Clarembald', is to me incomprehensible.

⁷⁵ MS Chartres Bibl. mun. 498, fol. 142r a:

'Vides certe etiam quantum valeat punctum. Nam ab ipso incipit linea. Ipso terminatur figura. Utique rectis lineis nullam figuram videmus fieri posse, nisi ab ipso puncto angulus claudatur. Deinde undecumque secari linea potest per ipsum sequatur, cum ipsum omnino nullam in se amittat sectionem. Nulla (*Nullam* MS) linea linee nisi per ipsum copulatur. Postremo cum ceteris planis figuris eam preponendam ratio demonstraverit que circulo claudatur, propter summam equalitatem, que alia ipsius equitatis moderatio est quam punctum in medio constitutum?'

Cf. Folkerts (n. 18), p. 106. While these lines, as M. Geymonat first recognized (see *ibid.* P. 92), form part of a section, ultimately Pythagorean in inspiration, excerpted from

Thierry will have read this not only as geometrical doctrine but as *integumentum*: he was well aware that the real Boethius had chosen the point (*punctum*) as his image for divine providence, to which the unfolding of fate is related 'as time is to eternity, as the circle to its central point (*uti est . . . ad aeternitatem tempus, ad punctum medium circulus*)' (*Cons.* iv pr. 6).

Similarly, Thierry's *probationes* from music and astronomy can be surmised to some extent, for instance from the descriptions of these arts in Alan of Lille's epic, *Anticlaudianus*, which throughout shows the imprint of Chartres. Alan characterizes all the arts of the Quadrivium as culminating in insights into the nature of God. Thus the study of music shows what is the reason (*ratio*)

why every song and the sweet melodies of sounds
are brought forth not by one voice but by union of voices,
sound like and unlike, diverse and the same,
unique and simple, double, bifurmed and still another.

Similarly, the study of astronomy bears witness to divine love at work in the heavens, showing

by what reason the stars move, by what law a planet
goes on a forward course, by what law it flees,
retrograde, or lingers at a station of its journey,
by what reason the Signs move on their oblique path . . .⁷⁶

It is motifs of this kind that Thierry is likely to have developed.

It is harder to conjecture what material the rest of the 'literal exposition' would have contained. The scale of the comments on the first two verses of Genesis (in *Tractatus* 18–28) implies that the continuation might have been substantial. And the deep influence of the *Timaeus* on Thierry's cosmology suggests that in his '*Timaeus*' too an account of the unfolding from the creator's mind was still to come.

4.1 How did Thierry envisage the passage from absolute necessity – in which the universe lies enfolded in the simplicity of the divine mind – to necessity of make-up? We have at least some indications of an answer in a remarkable passage in his Boethian *Commentum*, which has no counterpart in the later *Lectiones* and *Glosa*, possibly because Thierry was still searching to give these ideas a fully satisfying shape. On this one occasion, in the *Commentum*, he availed himself of Boethius' distinction between the eternal and the perpetual. He suggests that from the eternal Trinity of the theo-

Augustine's *De quantitate animae* XI–XII, they will have been known to Thierry only through the pseudo-Boethian dialogue on geometry.

⁷⁶ *Anticlaudianus*, ed. R. Bossuat (Paris 1955), III 426–9, IV 36–9.

logians there 'descends' a perpetual one, in which the foundations of the cosmos can be perceived:⁷⁷

From this holy and supreme Trinity descends, as it were, a trinity of perpetuals. Unity, inasmuch as it is unity, creates matter; inasmuch as it is the equality of unity, it creates form; by being love and binding, it creates spirit.

It is fitting that it is said to create matter by being unity. Indeed otherness (*alteritas*) descends from unity, and thus mutability descends from the immutable . . . But what is mutable is apt to take on diverse conditions – and matter is this aptitude. So matter itself is the mutability that descends from unity.

To show that the equality of unity (theologically the Son or Logos) creates form, Thierry uses 'equality' in a sense close to 'perfect balance of parts':⁷⁸

For form is the integrity and perfection of a thing – as humanity, for instance, to use an unfamiliar mode of expression, is the 'equality' of being human . . . So the forms of all things are rightly said to emanate (*emanare*) from the simple divine form, because each thing has the 'equality' of its being in accordance with that form.

Finally, unity inasmuch as it is 'love and binding' creates spirit:

All that exists is moved, that is, tends naturally, to what it loves. It tends towards being, as far as in it lies, and thus towards unity. So . . . unity is rightly said to create spirit by being that love and binding.

Matter, form, and spirit are thus the perpetual constituents of the universe. Though Thierry repeatedly uses the term 'to create' here, it is possible that he later abandoned the term 'perpetual', lest it suggest that the universe as such is a divine emanation rather than creation. There are indeed sentences in the *Commentum* that give the impression of a mystical monism:

As a face reflecting in diverse mirrors is one in itself, but is thought, because of the diversity of the mirrors, to be now one face, now another, so too, if one may make the comparison, the divine form in a sense sparkles in all things, and is but one in being the form of all.⁷⁹

Yet such perceptions are redressed in the *Tractatus* by the strong insistence that the shaping spirit within the universe – even if it can be identified with the Holy Spirit – works 'in accordance with physics (*secundum physicam*)'. Thus the cosmos is no mere mirror-image of divinity.

⁷⁷ *Commentum* II 39–42 (pp. 80–2).

⁷⁸ On Thierry's concept *aequalitas*, and how it applies both to the transcendent God and, by participation, to created things, see M.-D. Chenu, 'Une définition pythagoricienne de la vérité au Moyen Âge', *AHDLMA* XXVIII (1961) 7–13. Chenu, however, fails to mention Thierry's use of the expression *emanare* in the passage here cited (an expression that suggests a rather less 'orthodox' concept than participation).

⁷⁹ *Commentum* II 48 (p. 83). As P. Lucentini, *Platonismo medievale* (2nd ed., Florence 1980), p. 51, has well observed, this passage is deeply Eriugenian in inspiration.

4.2 If there is something unfinished about Thierry's thought in these directions, this is bound up with the fecundity of his ideas and the sheer range of what he was trying to combine and newly harmonize. We could say, negatively, that – unlike Boethius in his *Opuscula* – Thierry did not have a clear sense of the difference between philosophical and theological argument, or of the limitations of philosophy in relation to theological questions. Boethius distinguished carefully between the concepts furnished by Christianity and what he could do as philosopher to define and elucidate those concepts, to show that 'person', 'nature', 'substance', 'being' and the rest could be used meaningfully and without logical contradiction even in the paradoxical language involved in speaking of Trinity or Incarnation.

Thierry gives at times the impression of ignoring Boethius' distinction between theological concepts and philosophical analysis, at times of overriding it. Yet the Boethian position, with its admirable intellectual lucidity, admitted only a restricted number of moves and was not of itself capable of generating new ways of looking and ways of enquiry. If he had remained strictly Boethian in this respect, Thierry might also have remained simply a faithful exegete of Boethius, rather than become an innovator.

Thierry's originality lay in combining an extreme Platonism – in which forms and names exist indissolubly in the mind of God, and in which 'names essentiate things' – with a far-reaching naturalism. And this combination was no capricious yoking together of incompatibles, but the direct consequence of his individual way of envisaging *rerum universitas* in four modes. It was this that enabled Thierry to complement an account of the universe from the perspective of the *forma formarum* with one from the perspective of *primordialis materia*.

It is important to see the precise scope of Thierry's naturalism. There had indeed been attempts before him to give physical explanations for phenomena that theologians had held to be miraculous. Such attempts at explanation feature prominently in the waywardly original *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* of Augustinus Hibernicus (655).⁸⁰ But Thierry was unusual in the systematic way that he withdrew cosmology from the miraculous – in the way, that is, that (once having conceded that primordial matter was created) he accepted

⁸⁰ P.L. 35, 2149–2200. While I have found no evidence that Thierry knew this work itself, it is significant that at *Glosa* IV 13 he cites the only slightly later *Liber de ordine creaturarum*, which, under the influence of *De mirabilibus*, likewise shows a tendency to naturalistic explanation of many aspects of creation. Thierry cites the *Liber* as 'Ysidorus de ordine creaturarum': as M. C. Díaz y Díaz has shown in his excellent edition (Santiago de Compostela 1972), this attribution, very frequently found in the MSS, cannot be correct: it is an anonymous work of Irish provenance, of the later seventh century.

empirical principles pervasively, not selectively. It was easy in his time to admit such principles in particular contexts, such as mythography – to interpret stories about Jupiter and Juno, for instance, as statements about physics or astronomy.⁸¹ Thierry, however, went much further: he admitted the validity of empirical interpretation at the heart of his Platonic conception of reality. He is audaciously innovative in uniting the two seemingly conflicting models, the empirical and the Platonic, and in admitting the principles of natural explanation in every aspect of *explicatio*.

Again, perhaps no previous thinker had been as keenly aware of the 'integumental' nature of the language used in connection with both models: for Thierry, the Platonist considering the Ideas in the divine mind and the physicist considering the material processes by which the universe evolves rely equally on image and metaphor; their languages are necessarily no more than approximations to reality, and perhaps no more than constructs of minds aspiring to an *intelligibilitas* that remains beyond them.

Finally, Thierry is outstanding for his breadth of vision, for what I called his sense of the unity of knowledge. This can be seen embodied in the *Heptateuchon* as an educational ideal. It can likewise be seen in Thierry's epistemological ideal, the gradual ascent from sense-perception to *intelligibilitas*, in which each higher stage of cognition integrates the findings of the lower ones. And it can be seen in Thierry's passages of *concordia* – on names and things, on nature and fate and spirit – which, far from being mere encyclopaedic parading of authorities, are integrations of a creative kind, bringing together diverse disciplines and diverse authors – grammarians and metaphysicians, poets and prophets – in the service of more precise insight into *rerum universitas*.

⁸¹ Cf. P. Dronke, *Fabula* (Leiden–Cologne 1974), pp. 27–9.