

**Restoring Knowledge:
John of Salisbury's "Return to the Tree"**

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Abstract

In 1159 CE, the English diplomat and ecclesiastic John of Salisbury published two books, the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon*, the former a treatise on the nature of good governance, and the latter a defence of classical education.

Believing that political leadership should be based on moral precepts, John observed that moral judgment seemed to have been largely replaced in both church and state by personal ambition for wealth and power. Believing further that the knowledge required for moral judgment should be gained through proper education, John reasoned that knowledge itself had become fractured, and that it was necessary to return to that point and rebuild knowledge anew.

Concluding that the fracture occurred with Adam's expulsion from paradise for eating from the tree of knowledge, John reasoned that mankind must "return to the tree." This thesis analyzes John's "return to the tree" within the intellectual context of the twelfth-century renaissance.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

In the year 1156, John of Salisbury, a senior member of the staff of the archbishop of Canterbury, earned the personal enmity of the reigning English king, Henry II. While the exact reasons are still unclear, John may have been accused of influencing Pope Adrian IV to promote the authority of the English church above royal prerogative. Given that the pope was the Englishman Nicholas Brakespear, John's long-time personal friend, this view has some credence.

Neither exactly how he was made aware of the king's displeasure nor his immediate reaction is known. Shock? Fear? As a diplomat with regular access to the English court, and personal knowledge of Henry's mercurial nature, did John have a foreboding about the king who, just four years later, would remark famously (perhaps apocryphally) about Thomas Becket, "What miserable drones and traitors have I nourished and brought up in my household, who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born cleric?"¹ This outburst having prompted four knights from Henry's court to go to Canterbury and murder Becket in the cathedral, John knew that Henry's disfavour was not something to be taken lightly. His concern for both his career and his own personal safety brought to a head his long-standing misgivings about the seeming loss of morality in education and leadership, and prompted him to begin a deep examination of twelfth-century court culture.

A classically educated diplomat and ecclesiastic, John shared with many of his peers a general distaste for what he viewed as a growing careerist mentality among students in higher education, as well as a general venality among the burgeoning twelfth-century bureaucracies, both church and secular. As early as 1140, only four

¹ Many versions of Henry's exact words have made their way into popular culture. The version above is taken from the written account of Edward Grim, an eyewitness to the assassination and is quoted in several sources – e.g., see Simon Schama's *History of Britain* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 142.

years into his eleven-year tenure as a student in Paris and Chartres, John began a lengthy satirical Latin poem, the *Entheticus Maior*, which was not finally completed until 1156. The poem was an examination of wisdom and virtue, the relationship between the human and the divine, and the importance of good order in society. It also allowed “scathing caricatures of the personalities whom John encountered both in the Parisian classrooms and at European courts.”²

Using a classical literary form in which an inanimate object is given human characteristics, the *Entheticus* was addressed to a book, but was almost certainly meant to refer to Becket, another member of the Canterbury diplomatic circle, who had been named by Henry II to the post of chancellor of England in 1155. Warning the book to avoid the devious political environment of the court and return unsullied to Canterbury, the poem perhaps reflected John’s personal misgivings about Becket as much as about the court.³

Likely begun as a student exercise to prove (and improve) the quality of his Latin, the *Entheticus* allowed John to express his ideas and frustrations, but this initial intellectual academic satire proved an unsuitable voice for expressing the more serious concerns brought about by Henry’s antipathy. With the events of 1156, John realized that academic poetry was not a sufficiently potent enough voice with which to express intellectual, philosophical and personal concerns. Apart from very real fears for his own personal safety, John saw careerist self-interest in the ascendant, and perhaps even viewed both Becket and Henry as exemplars of a general lack of enlightened altruism that should have been the hallmark of leadership, both secular and ecclesiastical. Accordingly, immediately upon the completion of the *Entheticus*, John set out first on an intellectual voyage of self-consolation, but then expanded his scope to outline his views

² Cary J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 44.

³ “Scholars generally agree that Becket’s rapid appointment as chancellor was engineered by Theobald as a means to control the young king (Henry II) and to ensure renewed royal respect for the liberties of the church and the archepiscopacy. Becket was, in short, planted as an agent of Canterbury’s cause. In this role, however, he soon became a noteworthy disappointment, as scholarship usually attests. Becket’s loyalties changed, along with his personality, and far from being the leading voice favoring ecclesiastical liberty in Henry’s administration, he became one of the most notorious abusers of church privileges, often to his own profit.” Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 16-17.

about the relationship of knowledge to wisdom, and the role of wisdom in governance. This more serious treatise resulted in not one, but two books, both completed in 1159 and dedicated to Becket. The longer *Policraticus* presented John's beliefs about how one leads a balanced, consistent, and most of all, a virtuous political life. The basis of such a life begins with proper education, and the companion *Metalogicon* was his defense of classical education, specifically the *trivium*.

I began the MA program hoping to find a thesis topic that would bridge three foundational areas - the Middle Ages, Aristotle, and Christianity - in which, even after four years of undergraduate studies in Humanities at SFU, I felt that I was weak. I first considered focusing on the Condemnation of 1277 by which Pope John XXI authorized a condemnation against any teaching in the University of Paris that was considered heretical due to "errors" or radical Aristotelianism.⁴ However, an intensive period of directed reading convinced me that my advisor, Professor Paul Dutton, was correct in saying that, for the purpose of exploring the three areas noted above, the twelfth century was far richer in research possibilities. In his introduction to *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, M.-D. Chenu writes:

The twelfth century was a turning point in medieval civilization; so marked was the transformation that took place in the material conditions of life that it has been possible to speak of a 'technological revolution.' Encouraged by the breakup of the feudal monopoly of the soil, by the economic and political emancipation of urban artisans organized into guilds, and by the active mobility of men and goods in a market economy, the use and spread of new techniques of production and commerce profoundly altered not only the material side of life but also the modes of

⁴ "Even as Aristotle's naturalistic philosophy became foundational to university curricula, there was strong resistance to his ideas...Pope John XXI (c. 1210–1277), who in his earlier life had made a name for himself in logic (in fact, his book, the *Summa logicalis*, was the most widely used logic text in the thirteenth century), had heard rumors of suspicious teachings emanating from the University of Paris, the premier center for theological studies in the West. He ordered Stephen Tempier, the bishop of Paris, to investigate. Taking this papal letter as his warrant, Tempier hastily assembled a panel of theologians and in short order drew up a list of 219 propositions from the teachings of the Parisian masters that he condemned as heretical. Included in the list were approximately two dozen teachings of St. Thomas. The fact that the condemnation was issued three years to the day after Aquinas's death (7 March 1277) led some to suspect a personal insult to Thomas. "The Conservative Reaction and the Condemnation of 1277." *Arts and Humanities Through the Eras*. Ed. Edward I. Bleiberg, et al. Vol. 3: *Medieval Europe 814-1450* (Detroit: Gale, 2005), 281-283.

perception, sensibility, and representation that pertain to the life of the spirit.⁵

In the twelfth century the transition in “modes of perception, sensibility, and representation” was already well underway, but the positions arising from those changed modes had not yet been entrenched. For example, in the following century’s conflicts over university curriculum there were essentially two sides, pro-Aristotle and anti-Aristotle. In the twelfth century, on the other hand, the exploration and interpretation of ideas, both religious and secular, and the voices in which those explorations were expressed, were many and varied.

Given the fluid intellectual and philosophical environment of the twelfth century, it seemed appropriate for my thesis to focus on a single individual who exemplified the intellectual, political, and philosophical problems inherent in resolving the tension between change and continuity, and John of Salisbury is an excellent choice. Extensively educated first in England and then France, John spent the majority of his working years in diplomatic service to the archbishop of Canterbury, during a time when “Europe first became the *enfant terrible* she still is: a continent whose enduring political vigour is out of proportion to her size and numbers.”⁶ Throughout this time he traveled extensively and was personally associated with many of the century’s key figures, including Peter Abelard, Henry II of England, Thomas Becket, and Pope Adrian IV. Caught in the political struggle between church and king, he often lived uneasily between extreme positions, and once spent six years in exile as a result. John was not a foundational figure such as Abelard or Aquinas in the next century, but his value lies in

⁵ Chenu, 39.

⁶ Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford University Press, 1978), 5.

his stylistically competent, reasoned, and moderate chronicles, in which lie some surprisingly modern ideas and concerns.⁷

In 1159 John had ambitious goals for both the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*. As stated earlier, one might consider the *Policraticus* an advisory text on good governance, and the *Metalogicon* a description of the education necessary to understand the difference between good governance and bad, but the two works are far more than this. In the *Policraticus* John described the common good that exists within a political community, namely the realization of a just society on earth, and further that it should be the ultimate joint goal of ruler and those ruled to promote this common good. In addition, just as the community should have an ultimate goal, so too does the individual, namely salvation and eternal life in God's presence. While the attainment of the community good does not guarantee salvation, "John attempts to fuse classical and Christian values and to demonstrate a fundamental consistency between ancient moral philosophy and medieval moral theology."⁸

John presented a common anagogic theme in which logically-tested knowledge promoted wisdom, which in turn promoted moral choices leading to moral acts, with a lifetime of such acts leading ultimately to eternal salvation.⁹ The initial step was proper education that allowed the knower to discern wisdom within accumulated knowledge, and such education, in John's opinion, began with the *trivium* – grammar, logic, and rhetoric. This was his theme in the *Metalogicon* and, in addition to an extensive defense of the classical schema, he used the opportunity to castigate the pseudonymous

⁷ "John was neither a theologian nor an original thinker. He was rather, in the words of Bishop William Stubbs, 'the central figure of English learning,' or, perhaps more accurately, the writer of the twelfth century who came nearest to the modern critical attitude toward men and their ideas... He lacks the virtuosity and the emotional appeal of Bernard, and his vocabulary and constructions are at times difficult. He is unable to plan or to discard. But his cool judgment and unemphatic language always satisfy the reader." David Knowles, "John of Salisbury (c. 1115–1180)." *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Vol. 4 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006), 845.

⁸ Nederman, "Introduction," John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: of the frivolities of courtiers and the footprints of philosophers* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xxiii.

⁹ "An *anagoge* is a mystical interpretation that implies spiritual elevation, convergence towards a universal symbolic meaning, and an ecstatic feeling." Jacques Angelergues, "Anagogical Interpretation." *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 1 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005) 71.

“Cornificius” and his followers, those who wished to reduce or eliminate the *trivium* in order to focus on careerist studies, such as law. However, it was in the penultimate chapter of the *Policraticus* where John identified the point at which knowledge fractured, i.e., where the anagogic path was severed. For John this occurred at the Fall as described in Genesis, when Man ate from the forbidden tree, and “(Man) does not come back to life until he returns to the tree, and procures from it truth in learning, virtue in works and life in joy.”¹⁰

In English translation, the *Policraticus* and *Metalogicon* total in excess of 300,000 words, and represent for the most part practical advice and instruction. One could with justification consider John a utilitarian by nature. It seemed illogical, therefore, that John would summarize the works with what seemed to be merely a nostalgic look at a past paradise. For my thesis, I have therefore chosen to examine and analyze John’s “return to the tree” in four parts. Chapter one will be a biography of John, and chapter two will introduce the two major works, the *Policraticus* and *Metalogicon*, and the earlier prose poem *Entheticus*, in which the major themes of the later works first appear. Chapter three will describe how John was affected by the twelfth-century political and intellectual context, specifically the rise of the papacy to quasi-state bureaucracy, and chapter four will be an analysis of *Genesis* 1-3, in which I will argue that John’s “return to the tree” demands an interpretation of Adam’s nature that is deeply rooted in the earliest Palestinian rabbinic tradition, known to modern scholars as Jahwist (J). I will conclude that John’s “return to the tree” is fully appropriate as a practical instruction, aimed at teachers and students, if one understands it as the ultimate benefit of rightly-guided intention. But limiting my focus to an exploration of John’s practicality does him a disservice by minimizing the theological implications of the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon*.

¹⁰ *Policraticus*, 227.

While they were not widely read in his own time, there is no doubt that John's works, especially the *Policraticus*, became highly influential in later centuries.¹¹ John is rightly considered, in my view, to be a major medieval voice in moving political theory and practice back into the realm of philosophical enquiry. However, in this discussion there is often a question implied which, from my research, seems yet to be explored:

We should desire to be learned, John believes, because we will thereby fulfill our natural (and divinely ordained) purpose as human beings. And when we flourish in this way, we cannot fail to become happy in the way that God intended.¹²

What is God's intent? John's instructions to the courtiers are grounded not simply in education, ethics, or morality. Rather, they begin with John's interpretation of God's purpose for humanity, resolved in the intellectually rich and wonderfully metaphorical passage where John first proposes the "return to the tree." I will explore this passage in full in Chapter 5.

While either view is justifiable, reading John only as a political theorist or education critic ignores his Christianity. While he certainly had misgivings about medieval religious leadership, perhaps the major source of the noticeable anger and frustration never far from the surface of his writings, he was educated in the church, served the church, and ended his life as bishop of Chartres, one of the most prestigious bishoprics in all of Europe. Reading John as a Christian first and foremost is essential, in my view, to interpreting his "return to the tree."

¹¹ "Recent researches into fourteenth-century jurisprudence have shown that the *Policraticus* was one of the most quoted and perused treatises written by a medieval philosopher. It was especially amongst the scholar jurists of the Neopolitan seat of learning – pioneers of the humanistic method in legal science – that the *Policraticus* enjoyed absolute authority in all questions pertaining to the sphere of legal ethics. It was upon the *Policraticus* that a whole system of legal thought was built." Ullman, W. "The Influence of John of Salisbury on Medieval Italian Jurists." *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 235 (Sep., 1944), pp. 384-392, 384.

¹² Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 75.

2. John of Salisbury: A Biography

My thesis revolves around three of John of Salisbury's major works: the *Entheticus*, the *Policraticus*, and the *Metalogicon*. Inasmuch as these works are notably autobiographical, a personal sketch of the man is essential to understanding John's motivations, establishing his priorities, and analyzing his intended goals. In preparing this brief biography, I intend to show that John's work was driven by three major personal crises. First, after just two years of post-secondary education, he realized that neither Paris nor the masters under whom he had studied lived up to his expectations, and he must somehow start anew. Second, he later observed that many teaching masters who provided the extensive education in the liberal arts that he considered essential as a basis for any true knowledge were ignored, ridiculed or even charged with heresy. Lastly, during his lengthy diplomatic service it seemed to John that most educated men were self-serving, cynical, and secular, and he despaired that education in general was intrinsically flawed, and wondered how it became so.

While his extensive personal letters, and his autobiographical notes in other writings, most specifically the *Metalogicon*, offer many details about the life of a man born nearly 900 years ago, there is much that is missing, unclear, or contradictory, waiting for more research on extant materials, or the discovery of materials currently unknown. In order therefore to paint a biographical portrait of John, it has been necessary to draw on materials published over a sixty-year period. I have also tried to offer reasonable conjectures about currently unknown aspects of his life.

Not the least of these unknown areas is his early life, so much so that even his date of birth can only be estimated as somewhere between 1115 and 1120. His mother Gille (also known as Egidia) appears to have had four sons by two or three fathers, all likely dignitaries or canons of Salisbury cathedral. In order from first to last born, these

sons are known as Richard Peche, Robert fitzGille, John of Salisbury, and Richard of Salisbury.¹³

The prefix “fitz”, (cognate with French fils < Latin filius), meaning “son of”, was normally coupled with the name of the father. Since Robert’s surname means “son of Gille,” his father might be different from that of Richard Peche who is identified as a canon at Exeter in 1143. The other brothers seem to have followed in turn, although the dating is unclear. Richard is little mentioned in John’s writings; Robert fitzGille was “seemingly always on excellent terms with John, who claimed that they looked very much alike, that is to say, took after their mother, to whom, clearly, both were devoted.” Robert’s career at Exeter was more distinguished than that of Richard Peche (e.g., Robert was chosen to replace Baldwin, archdeacon of Totnes.) At the time of his death Robert was a fairly rich man, perhaps because he had a medical practice, as well as his canonry and archdeaconry.¹⁴

Richard Peche and Robert fitzGille appear to have settled down in Exeter for life and to have brought their mother to live there.¹⁵ John’s earliest schooling likely occurred at Old Sarum, a cathedral whose educational facilities dated to the late eleventh century, according to Orme’s “List of medieval English schools, 1066 - 1530,” but his more advanced studies probably occurred at Exeter.¹⁶

As with much of John’s life prior to his autobiographical notes in the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* (which essentially begin with his arrival in France in 1136) details of

¹³ Frank Barlow, “John of Salisbury and his brothers.” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 46 (1995) 96.

¹⁴ Barlow, 98-100.

¹⁵ “(The two older sons) were prudent men who kept out of trouble. In this they differed sharply from Gille’s younger sons (who were) more brilliant, more restless, more adventurous than the elder sons of Gille.” Barlow, 100.

¹⁶ “The cathedral school at Exeter was larger and more cosmopolitan than Old Sarum in its student body as well as its faculty. In addition to both primary and secondary education, Exeter offered at least rudimentary instruction in theology and canon law, whereas that does not seem to have been the case at Old Sarum during John’s time.” Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 3-4.

his early schooling are speculative at best. Nicholas Orme's extensive works on the schools of medieval England offer important clues.¹⁷

Orme presents a four-stage hierarchy of schooling, only three of which have application to John. (Orme's third stage can best be termed "business studies," including dictamen, accountancy, French and the principles and procedures of common law. However, centres of such studies do not appear until the fourteenth century.) Orme's first and lowest grade consisted of those that we might call "primary" schools, but were termed "reading" or "song" schools at the time. Boys entering the school between seven and ten years of age started learning the basic alphabet using whatever visual aids were available, including waxed tablets, and even black ink on a whitewashed wall. They then usually moved on to a primer that included basic Catholic prayers and simpler liturgical texts, such as the hours of the Virgin Mary. Reading aloud was common practice, and the study of song was so dominant that it gave the name "song school." Orme notes that, since a high proportion of schoolboys were being educated with an eye to a career in the Church, plainsong prepared them for the basic duty of all clergy, the daily repetition of the divine office.

While the formal teaching of song was not universal, Orme also notes "There is evidence for the teaching of song in connection with the nine English secular cathedrals, those that were staffed by a chapter of secular canons."¹⁸ Inasmuch as these nine included both Salisbury and Exeter, it is likely that John's primary education included song.

A thorough grounding in Latin grammar was a prerequisite to the highest rank of medieval schools where students were introduced to the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and

¹⁷ The description of medieval English schools on this and the following page is taken from Nicholas Orme's *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1973).

¹⁸ Orme, 64.

possibly canon and civil law and theology. In addition to Latin, it also likely that John's early schooling included substantial French, the only vernacular language allowed.¹⁹

Orme states: "The appearance of masters teaching these subjects in public and gathering students about them is a characteristic of the twelfth century."²⁰ While the nine secular cathedrals were the principal sites for these higher studies, as already noted Exeter seems to have offered law and theological studies at an earlier date than Salisbury. Whether this was the primary reason for John's move to study at Exeter is of course unknown, but it would certainly be in keeping with the spirit of a young scholar with neither name nor property, hoping to use education as a vehicle for advancement.

When he completed his education at Exeter John would have had options for post-secondary education in England. However, English teaching masters remained faithful to monastic disciplines: song, canon law, and religious science. Like other ambitious young Englishmen seeking a less constrained learning environment, John was drawn to Paris.²¹ It is likely that he also considered Laon as a number of English students had already studied there, and relations between the canons of Laon and their English brethren were excellent. In addition, Anselm of Laon, the founder of the school of theology, was already considered one of the period's great teaching masters. However, as students had been drawn to Laon simply because of Anselm's teaching, they started looking elsewhere after his death in 1117 and, as Riché notes: "The time of Laon had passed, the time of Paris began, and it's therefore to Paris that John decided to come to study in 1136."²²

As much as John's early life is open to conjecture, his autobiographical notes in the *Metalogicon* offer a specific time and purpose: "When, but still a youth, I first

¹⁹ "During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (French) had spread widely among the native English gentry, the clergy and even among merchants and tradesman...It was the only vernacular language permitted in schools, the children of gentlemen still learnt it from the cradle and social climbers who wished to be reputed gentlemen spoke it with great assiduity." Orme, 73.

²⁰ Orme, 79.

²¹ Pierre Riché, "Jean de Salisbury et le monde scolaire du xii^e siècle." *The world of John of Salisbury* (Oxford: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1984).

²² Riché, 41.

journeyed to Gaul for the sake of study, in the year following the death of the illustrious King of the English, Henry (I) ‘the Lion of Justice.’²³ Because Henry I is known to have died 1 December 1135, this establishes John’s arrival in Paris in 1136. His primary wish was to study at Mont Sainte-Geneviève with the “Peripatetic of Pallet,” a sobriquet given Peter Abelard, referring either to his Aristotelian teaching or to Abelard’s own autobiographical history where he states that, as a young man, he renounced the inheritance due to him as the eldest son of a Breton noble, left his birthplace of Le Pallet in the northwest of France and “began to travel about in several provinces disputing, like a true peripatetic philosopher, wherever I heard there was a keen interest in dialectic.”²⁴

The cultural and economic conditions in Paris that supported a rapid expansion of education and influx of students and masters are outside the scope of this thesis, but it is worth noting that the French kings and local officials “welcomed scholars with support and protection while imposing only the most minimal restraints on their activities.”²⁵ For example, all students and masters in Paris were considered members of the clergy, or “*cleric*”, and, by the middle of the twelfth century, enjoyed two important privileges. First, the “*privilegium canonis*” considered their bodies sacrosanct. Violence against a cleric was liable to automatic excommunication. Second, the “*privilegium fori*” provided immunity to all clerics against jurisdiction of secular courts. A principal point of contention between Thomas Becket and Henry II arose from Henry’s attempts to impose

²³ John, of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: a twelfth-century defense of the verbal and logical arts of the trivium*. (Gloucester, Massachusetts: P. Smith, 1971), 95.

²⁴ Peter Abelard, “*Historia Calamitatum*. Abelard to a Friend: the story of his misfortunes.” *The letters of Abelard and Heloise*, translated [from the Latin] with an introduction and notes by Betty Radice, (Toronto, Ontario: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003.) 3. Stephen Ferruolo makes a persuasive argument that one cannot underestimate Abelard’s influence in making Paris the destination of choice for ambitious young students: “Abelard was a dominant figure, if not the dominant figure, in the schools during much of the next four decades (of the 12th century). As the most renowned teacher of his time, he attracted scores of students to Paris when he taught there...and the methods he used with such skill became the accepted means of instruction...More than anyone else, Abelard made Paris the place to go for the best teaching and the newest learning.” Stephen C. Ferruolo, *The origins of the university: the schools of Paris and their critics, 1100-1215* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985), 18-19.

²⁵ Ferruolo, 49.

greater secular authority over the English clerics, and Becket's absolute refusal to allow any such imposition.²⁶

Paris's attractiveness to students made it equally attractive to teaching masters. Citing three sources (John, William of Tyre, and the unknown author of *Metamorphosis Goliae*), Ferruolo cites the presence of no fewer than sixteen known teaching masters in Paris in the middle decades of the twelfth century, not including Abelard who left Paris not long after John's arrival in 1136 and died six years later. Adding the masters teaching at St. Victor, whom the three aforementioned sources exclude, "the concentration of learned men in Paris becomes even more impressive."²⁷

John's tenure in Paris then began under Abelard at the school at Mont-Ste-Geneviève, on the left bank of the Seine, a site chosen specifically by Abelard in 1112 as it was beyond the city boundaries of Paris located on the right bank, and therefore not subject to ecclesiastical control by the Catholic bishops in the city. His return to the school in 1135 drew many students, but was short-lived. Continual pressure from Bernard of Clairvaux (which would eventually lead to Abelard's condemnation at the Council of Sens) forced Abelard to leave the school in 1137. "After his departure," writes John, "I became the disciple of Master Alberic, who had a very high reputation as the best of the other dialecticians."²⁸

John's new choice of master might seem odd as Alberic was diametrically opposed to Abelard's nominalism, the view that universals are mere words (*nomina*). Given Abelard's adversarial nature it's also not surprising that "he devoted a great deal of effort to pouring cold water on the metaphysical excesses of his predecessors and contemporaries."²⁹ Abelard's metaphysics is the first great example of nominalism in the

²⁶ John W. Baldwin, *Paris, 1200*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 180.

²⁷ Ferruolo, 23.

²⁸ *Metalogicon*, 95.

²⁹ Among Abelard's contemporaries who supported these "metaphysical excesses," namely that universals can exist without names (and thus outside of consciousness) were William of Champeaux, Clarembald of Arras, Jocelin of Soissons, Walter of Mortagne, and Bernard of Chartres. Gyula Klima, "The Medieval Problem of Universals." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (First published September 10, 2000; substantive revision March 19, 2008.)

Western tradition, and he also considered universality to be a semantic feature of language, rather than an ontological feature of the world.

Concurrent with Alberic, John also studied under Robert of Melun, but found neither master satisfactory, believing Alberic too cautious and Robert too glib in their respective teaching methods. While critical, however, John exhibited his typical moderation: "If anyone were to have the qualities of Alberic and Robert combined, it would be impossible in our age to find his match as a disputant."³⁰

Following his studies with Alberic and Robert in 1137-38, he considered himself to be fully proficient in dialectic, "for I had learned the subject so thoroughly that, with youthful lack of reflection, I unduly exaggerated my own knowledge. However, I recovered my senses...and transferred to the grammarian of Conches."³¹ Two years prior he had come to Paris with the highest youthful expectations, and those expectations had been completely frustrated. Abelard, in John's view the *sine qua non* of Paris masters, once again withdrew, likely under pressure,³² after only a brief tenure back at Mont Sainte-Geneviève, and his highly controversial reputation began to extend to his students.³³ Even though they were well-regarded masters, John's choices of Alberic and Robert proved totally unsatisfactory and whatever knowledge he felt he had gained from them was merely rote. In short, two years in Paris had been for naught.

John's "transfer" to William of Conches is noteworthy on several fronts. First, while some writers (e.g., Southern and Keats-Rohan) believe that William was teaching in Paris, Édouard Jeuneau has argued very convincingly that William was at this time

³⁰ *Metalogicon*, 97.

³¹ *Metalogicon*, 98.

³² "Bernard of Clairvaux visited Paris soon after Easter, 1139, simply to preach a sermon urging scholars to join the Cistercians...but later his first unsuccessful attempts to silence Abelard, combined with worrisome stories he likely heard from his converts about conditions in the schools of Paris, drove him to wage a very public attack against both the schools and specific masters, Abelard at the forefront. It was a battle between Cîteaux and Paris, the new Babylon, for influence in Rome and for the direction of the Church." Ferruolo, 49.

³³ "Indiscreet disciples, such as Peter Berengar, who had not really understood (Abelard's) doctrines, went about the kingdom preaching rank heresy and saying they were handing on the precepts of the great Master Peter Abelard." Roger Lloyd, *Peter Abelard: the orthodox rebel* (London: Latimer House, second edition, 1947), 179.

teaching at Chartres, and John had thus left Paris altogether.³⁴ With this in mind, a question arises about John's financial support. In autobiographical notes in the *Metalogicon* about his life as a student John states: "I took as pupils the children of nobles, who in return provided for my material necessities. For I lacked the help of friends and relatives, and God thus aided me and relieved my poverty."³⁵ Nederman believes that this occurred "perhaps after 1141, but more probably after 1138, when he began to run short of funds."³⁶ Chartres would have been a far less expensive place than Paris for a medieval student's food and lodging, and whatever financial support he was receiving would have stretched further than in Paris.³⁷ However, it is hard to imagine John finding many tutoring opportunities in Chartres, and it seems more likely that his teaching activities began when he returned to Paris in 1141 after three years with William.

John's time with William re-energized him and he returned to Paris for further study, likely in the winter of 1141, beginning his second sojourn in Paris as a student of Richard l'Evêque. With Richard he studied the *quadrivium*, to which he had first been introduced by a certain Hardewin the German, and also rhetoric, to which he had been briefly exposed by Thierry of Chartres. Because the latter became chancellor of Chartres in 1141, it seems likely that John worked under Thierry at Chartres at some point during his years with William of Conches. Little else is known about Hardewin, and one can only speculate whether he was teaching at Chartres or Paris. The latter seems

³⁴ Édouard Jeuneau, *Rethinking the School of Chartres* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 43-55.

³⁵ *Metalogicon*, 98.

³⁶ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 9.

³⁷ Even accepting the "noble poverty" of the scholar, John's concerns over finances would be a recurring theme, even late in life after he was named bishop of Chartres. As for his student days, we can only guess at three possible sources of his support. First, given that he was considered "promising ecclesiastical timber" during his early school years at Salisbury and Exeter, it is likely that he received at least partial support from the English church. Already mentioned is the support given to scholars by the French monarchy and the city of Paris. Lastly, there may have been family support, most likely from his well-to-do older stepbrother Robert fitzGille. However, it seems reasonable that financial support from any of these sources would not have simply continued as long as John chose to remain a student, and perhaps John's ongoing choices of teaching masters (Abelard, William of Conches, Gilbert of Poitiers) considered suspect by ecclesiastical authority made his supporters less comfortable in offering continued financial backing.

more likely. If, as his name suggests, Hardewin traveled to France from Germany, Paris would have been the more logical destination given its far greater educational opportunities. Also, when John's initial plan to study primarily with Abelard collapsed in 1137, it seems plausible that John would have considered an introduction to the *quadrivium* as one immediate alternative. Since Hardewin is otherwise unknown, it also seems plausible that his fee for teaching would have been modest and therefore within John's financial means. In any event, John considered that he learned far more about the *quadrivium* in Richard's review than he had with Hardewin, perhaps a clue as to why Hardewin is not well known.

To suggest the depth and breadth of John's education, I have added my conclusions to chronologies by Weijers, Keats-Rohan, and Nederman to suggest the following brief summary of John's student years in France:

- 1136: Studies dialectic with Abelard until the latter's premature departure;
- 1137-38: Studies with Alberic of Paris and Robert of Melun; introduced to *quadrivium* by Hardewin; becomes a friend of Peter de Celle;
- 1138-41: Studies grammar with William of Conches at Chartres; also studies rhetoric with Thierry of Chartres;
- 1141 Returns to Paris and begins a review of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* under Richard l'Evêque; begins theological studies with Gilbert of Poitiers until the latter takes up the office of bishop of Poitiers; begins tutoring activities because of lack of financial support; professional and personal friendship with Adam du Petit Pont;
- 1142 Continues theology with Robert Pullen until Pullen is named a cardinal in 1144;
- 1144 Continues theology under Simon of Poissy; studies rhetoric with Peter Helias;
- 1147 Leaves Paris to serve as clerk to Abbot Peter de Celle.³⁸

³⁸ Keats-Rohan, K.S.B. "The Chronology of John of Salisbury's Studies in France: A Reading of *Metalogicon* 2:10." *Studi Medievali*; Weijers, Olga. "The Chronology of John of Salisbury's Studies in France (*Metalogicon* 2:10)"; Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 4-10.

The reasons why John left Parisian student life are not well documented, but it is most likely that he simply grew disenchanted. John attended the Council of Rheims in 1148, probably as Peter de Celle's agent, at which his former master Gilbert de Poitiers was examined for his heterodox views on the Trinity. John wrote a highly detailed record of the events at Rheims, published later as the *Historia Pontificalis*. Nederman concludes: "If John held out any hope for an eventual return to study and education in the schools, whether at Paris or elsewhere, his witnessing of the trial of Gilbert surely confirmed his worst fears about the future of scholarly life."³⁹

His services to Peter de Celle are unclear, perhaps it was simply a matter of Peter providing a place of respite for an old friend. John was now nearing or past thirty years of age and was without clear prospects. Continuing to pursue a career as a teaching master seemed a lost cause.⁴⁰ Likewise unclear is a brief period of service to the papal court before returning to England from Rheims but, on his return, he carried a recommendation from Bernard of Clairvaux to Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury. Exactly how this occurred is unclear as John had never met Bernard until their introduction at Rheims, and Bernard's recommendation was based entirely on the opinions of others. These others included Peter de Celle, who likely arranged the introduction at Rheims, and Robert Pullen, John's former master and Bernard's good friend. Because Bernard of Clairvaux was the central figure in the heresy trials of Abelard, William of Conches, and Gilbert of Poitiers,⁴¹ John must have accepted Bernard's letter of recommendation with a certain ambivalence, i.e. "There is a fine irony in the intellectual politics surrounding Bernard's letter of recommendation."⁴² Ironic or

³⁹ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 12.

⁴⁰ "John may not have been able to earn sufficient keep as a teacher, hardly surprising given his rigorous attitude towards education that was apparently not in keeping with the 'market' for more superficial and utilitarian learning that prevailed in his day. Simply stated, John may not have been a very popular teacher because he demanded too much from his students." Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 11-12.

⁴¹ Paul Dutton clearly outlines how heresy charges against Abelard, William of Conches, and Gilbert of Poitiers were, in essence, a single ongoing attack by the church against heterodoxy, initiated by Bernard of Clairvaux and fostered by conservative ecclesiastics like William of St-Thierry. See Paul Edward Dutton, *The mystery of the missing heresy trial of William of Conches* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2006).

⁴² Nederman, *John of Salisbury* 13.

not, the letter served its purpose and John was received into service at Canterbury, “the first fulcrum upon which [his] career rose and fell.”⁴³

John’s association with Canterbury lasted from 1148 until 1176, when he was named bishop of Chartres. However, he was often not in residence at Canterbury, sometimes by choice and other times by circumstance. His earliest responsibilities were as one of Theobald’s secretaries where “John was an omnicompetent bureaucrat: he composed the archbishop’s letters, advised him on legal and political affairs, traveled to the Continent as an archiepiscopal envoy, and altogether lived in the manner of a trusted intimate.”⁴⁴ As evidence, John’s own summary of his diplomatic travels is impressive not only in frequency, but also in scope.⁴⁵

John’s principal writings, the subject of my next chapter, come from, and are highly influenced by, his service at Canterbury. His poem *Entheticus de Dogmate Philosophorum* (commonly referred to *Entheticus Maior*) was likely begun around 1141 as a student exercise in satire. Ferruolo notes that satires aimed at the “decline in learning” were common in the twelfth century, as concern over the careerist demands of many students was seen as reducing, or worse trivializing, the value of the full *trivium*. By 1154 John had been in diplomatic service long enough to observe in the courtiers the results of facile education undertaken principally for purposes of advancement, and the latter half of the *Entheticus* reflects this pessimistic view.

Therefore, immediately after completing the *Entheticus* John began his most well-known works, the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*, the former a defense of the liberal arts, principally the *trivium*, and the latter a treatise on the nature of political

⁴³ Christopher Brooke, “John of Salisbury and His World.” *The world of John of Salisbury*. 8.

⁴⁴ *Policraticus*, xvi.

⁴⁵ “I have crossed the Alps ten times, journeyed to Apulia twice, and repeatedly handled negotiations with the Roman Church for my superiors and friends. I have, also, on numerous occasions, traveled about Gaul as well as England, in connection with various cases which have arisen.” *Metalogicon*, 142.

science and good government.⁴⁶ They were dedicated in 1159 as a pair to Thomas Becket, the chancellor of England and future archbishop of Canterbury. That John had time and motivation for these major works is likely explained by the previously mentioned enmity of King Henry II over church vs. crown authority. This dispute continued for more than a decade, forced John into exile in France in 1163, and was the background behind Becket's assassination in 1170. During his exile John wrote the *Historia Pontificalis*, a highly personalized history of the medieval church with, as noted earlier, specific attention paid to the heresy trial of Gilbert of Poitiers in 1148, to which John was a witness.

In 1176 John was suddenly and surprisingly named bishop of Chartres, and remained in that post until his death in 1180. Of the six-year period between Becket's death and John's new episcopal appointment little is certain. He did immediately begin work on a hagiography of Becket, a project to which he devoted substantial energy, "not least in the hopes of furthering the hegemony of Canterbury over the English church and the independence of the church from the crown, two of his favorite ambitions."⁴⁷ His energy, however, seems not to have overcome a certain ambivalence about Becket, as the work is thin and guarded. He also was named treasurer of Exeter in 1173 and it is likely that he spent his time between Exeter and Canterbury, the former because of long-standing family and professional connections, and the latter because of his need for the library archives at Canterbury in preparing his life of Becket.

Nederman suggests that John's appointment to Chartres arose not only because of the immediate and widespread French support of the martyred Becket, but also because, as an aged foreigner, and one inexperienced at ecclesiastical leadership, John would likely defer to the wishes of those who placed him in office. Available documents are not sufficiently complete to offer a definitive judgment of John's record as bishop. There is a letter from Peter of Blois complaining that a group of Chartres canons was

⁴⁶ John is "less of a philosophical poet and more of a political philosopher than he had been even five years earlier. He could no longer be satisfied with the *Entheticus* alone as an expression of his views, particularly if he wanted to give them *public expression* (author's emphasis). Above all, he wished to analyze political systems, not simply satirize the political scene." Rodney Thomson, "What is the *Entheticus*?" *The world of John of Salisbury*, 301.

⁴⁷ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 35.

able to block Peter's appointment as provost of Chartres in favour of John's nephew, Robert, but "what we make of this letter with its apparent charge of nepotism, or at least favouritism, depends on the existence of additional evidence that is not presently available."⁴⁸ However, one cannot overlook the fact that he was, from his time as a student with William, a Chartrian, "one of their own," and likely renewed, or even added to, his extensive network of personal connections. He appears to have been an active bishop, for example taking a leading role in the Third Lateran Council in 1179, and he was granted the privilege of burial at Chartres when he died October 25th the following year. This, and the fact that in his will he bequeathed all his worldly goods, including a substantial library, to the cathedral chapter at Chartres suggests that his time there was positive. Nederman states: "John's private library in a very significant way reflected the man: religious yet humanistic, eclectic in intellect yet respectful of tradition and authority. These qualities always marked his writings as much as his life and career."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 39.

⁴⁹ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 39.

3. Three Major Works

In the Introduction to John of Salisbury's *Entheticus Maior* and *Minor*, editor Jan van Laarhoven states: "We should not forget that every writer and certainly every poet is always a kind of biographer. Speaking to a second person – his archbishop, his friends and colleagues, his students, or even 'his' chancellor – John betrays himself."⁵⁰ While Laarhoven's comment applied specifically to the *Entheticus*, it applies equally to most, if not all, of John's writings – certainly to the three principal works that ground my thesis, the *Entheticus*, the *Policraticus*, and the *Metalogicon*.

3.1. The *Entheticus Maior* and *Minor*

The earliest of John's major works, the *Entheticus Maior* and *Minor* comprise two poems, the former of 1852 lines and the latter of 306 lines. Technically, both works are in elegiac distich, a classical Latin poetic form especially popularized by the Roman poet Ovid⁵¹, in which hexameters of six metrical feet are followed by pentameters of five feet. This "Ovidian meter" was central to the teaching of Latin grammar in the *trivium* of the twelfth-century schools. The longer *Maior*, fully titled *Entheticus de Dogmate Philosophorum*, presages a number of stylistic and thematic elements that mark John's entire corpus, the first of these being in the very title. Since *dogmate* is the ablative singular of *dogma*, it seems obvious that the title refers to philosophical doctrine, but what is the meaning of *Entheticus*? Scholars generally agree that *Entheticus* is a word

⁵⁰ John, of Salisbury, Bishop of Chartres. *John of Salisbury's Entheticus maior and minor*, edited by Jan van Laarhoven. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987), 52.

⁵¹ "Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.–A.D. 17), one of the most gifted of Roman poets, exercised an influence on Christian and secular poetry in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance second only to that of Virgil. Within a few years of his death his *Metamorphoses* became the standard work of reference for Greek and Roman mythology and legend, a position it has never lost... In technical matters, such as metrics, prosody, and poetic diction, Ovid's usage became the classical standard." M. P. Cunningham, "Ovid in Christian Culture," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 727

of John's own creation, a stylistic "Greek-like" title such as we will see again with the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*.⁵² Laarhoven suggests that there is some philological evidence to conclude that John used *Entheticus* to suggest "an introductory survey," i.e., a schoolman's discourse, a conclusion with which I agree.⁵³

If, in fact, John intended the *Entheticus* as a teaching tool, questions present themselves. Why did he choose the form of a poem? And why the very formal, restrictive distich style,⁵⁴ instead of, for example, the prosimetrum style popular since late antiquity with writers such as Boethius and Martianus Capella, as well as John's contemporary Bernardus Silvestris?⁵⁵ To answer these questions, one starts with the poem's structure, audiences, and themes.

The *Entheticus* is set in the form of a *prosopopoeia*, a rhetorical device in which the writer either speaks in the form of another person, or in which an inanimate object is given human characteristics. The object humanized in the *Entheticus* is a book about to take a journey, and being advised of the dangers of a journey from Canterbury that will take it through the schools and the court, before returning to Canterbury.

At each stage the book is warned against false philosophy and self-interest. The poem begins with the poet's brief invitation address to the book which ends: "Who are you that come, what is the reason for the journey, where are you going, and whence?" perhaps (the court) will thus inquire. Reply thusly, little book."⁵⁶ The remainder of the poem outlines this response in four parts. Part I, "From Words to the Word", lines 25-450, begins with a satirical look at an unnamed educational critic who denies any value

⁵² "John shared the preference for seemingly Greek titles...with other Western medieval authors (Anselm, *Proslogion*; William of Conches, *Dragmaticon*; Thierry of Chartres, *Eptateuchon*) though neither he nor they knew Greek." John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, 16. Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon*, discussed in a following chapter, is another example.

⁵³ For the complete discussion, see John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, 16-17.

⁵⁴ Laarhoven refers to John's use of distich as "the straightjacket of classical prosody." *Entheticus*, 17

⁵⁵ *Prosimetrum* refers to a style composed of alternating passages of prose and poetry. Among the many authors likely known to John who wrote in prosimetrum were: Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philogiae et Mercurii*; Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*; Bernardus Silvestris, *Cosmographia*; and Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae*.

⁵⁶ John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, 104.

to ancient Greek or Roman authorities, or the study of grammar. John's distaste for the self-important educational pedagogy of the time is evident as his unnamed educational critic boasts: "I am a resident of the Petit Pont, a new projector in arts, for I boast that former discoveries are my own: what the old men have taught and dear youth does not know, I swear to have been discoveries of my own."⁵⁷ (This same distaste, albeit far more direct and hostile, will appear in his characterization of Cornificius in the *Metalogicon*.)⁵⁸ This satirical look at critics leads to a broader treatment of the causes of intellectual error, as well as identifying the essential purpose of genuine learning. Part II, "From Philosophers to Philosophy", lines 451-1254, reasserts the importance of ancient authorities with a critical survey of foundational philosophies, Greek and Roman, leaving "the impression of an author whose idealism suggests the short patience for compromise that signals limited experience with the world at large."⁵⁹

In Part III, "From Court to Curia," lines 1275–1752, the book is warned against the moral and intellectual indifference, and even hostility toward learning, in the world of the courtier. Drawing no difference between the secular and ecclesiastical courts, John's tone is notably less optimistic than in Parts I and II, even suggesting that "the well-intentioned courtier must at times adopt the tricks of his surroundings in order to survive and pursue his program of reform."⁶⁰ For it is the role of the true courtier to advise, guide, and counsel widely, without concern for advancement or position. Concerning the warning against both secular and clerical courts, "the change in (John's) attitude from Part II is striking, perhaps indicative of the perspective of someone who has become familiar with the ethical dilemmas endemic to public life."⁶¹

If the book could not find a truly virtuous existence in the schools, the courts, or the curia, where else could it possibly look? John examined this question in the very

⁵⁷ Laarhoven, 108.

⁵⁸ "As far as a Christian may licitly do so, I would despise both the person (of Cornificius) and his opinion. But let him snore away till midday, become drunk in his daily carousals, and squander his time by wallowing in carnal excesses which would shame even an Epicurean pig, as much as his heart desires. I will confine myself to attacking his opinion, which has ruined many, as not a few believe what he says." *Metalogicon*, 13

⁵⁹ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 49.

⁶⁰ Nederman, 49.

⁶¹ Nederman, 49.

brief Part IV, “From Fear to Love,” lines 1753-1834. His conclusion was that virtue exists only in a life of moderation and philosophical contemplation, open to all learning, pagan or Christian. But above all, the philosopher must understand and accept the role of grace, i.e., “Grace alone gives birth to and strengthens pious love...that ‘alone’ teaches that, if grace is lacking, the striving of nature towards good will be in vain.”⁶²

The *Entheticus* was therefore a didactic poem that includes satire, polemic, and moralizing treatise, three basic elements grounding John’s works. However, “[with *Entheticus*] John displays a clear awareness of the problems confronted by the cleric in public life, but he has barely begun to consider potential solutions. The element of his humanism – the recognition that it is both possible and desirable to promote change in the world – appeared only with his move from satirical poetry to philosophical prose.”⁶³ We will see this change with his later works, but the question remains: why did he choose to begin with a very traditional, very structured Latin poetic form? His biography might suggest an answer. We recall that John’s initial years in Paris were disappointing, beginning with Abelard’s precipitate departure from Mont Sainte-Geneviève, and John’s less-than-satisfactory experiences as a student of both Robert and Alberic. Given his admiration of William of Conches, it seems logical to believe that he returned to Paris with a renewed sense of purpose, not to mention a thorough grounding in Latin grammar.⁶⁴ But we might also consider that John’s departure from Chartres was triggered, if only partially, by the charges of heresy against William in 1140-1141.⁶⁵

Ferruolo outlines how satirical writing flourished in the twelfth century, and how the poetry of classical Roman satirists such as Juvenal were a core part of grammar

⁶² John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, 222.

⁶³ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 51.

⁶⁴ “I then transferred...to the grammarian of Conches. I studied under the latter for three years, during which I learned much. Nor will I ever regret the time thus spent.” John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 97.

⁶⁵ Between 1140 and 1147, three of John’s most admired masters, Peter Abelard, William of Conches, and Gilbert of Poitiers, were charged with heresy. (For a full discussion, see Dutton.) John’s sympathetic treatment of Gilbert is found in his *Historia Pontificalis*, which includes extensive commentary on the legal proceedings against Gilbert in 1147-1148. While the *Historia* was not published until 1163 or 1164, John would have had the trial and the church’s treatment of Gilbert fully in mind when writing the *Metalogicon* and *Policraticus*.

training, with students assigned the task of imitating classical themes.⁶⁶ Whether John was so assigned by William of Conches is not known, but it is known that William covered Juvenal in his teaching, and Laarhoven adds that, “more than an expression of personal lyric feeling, this ‘classical’ poetry was a demonstration of technical skill and veneration for learning. How could a promising student such as John resist this innocent temptation?”⁶⁷

Nederman argues convincingly that the *terminus ad quem* for the *Entheticus* must be mid-1156.⁶⁸ However, John’s growing rift with Henry II and his court created personal stress that could not be assuaged simply with poetry, and John thus was driven, much in the manner of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, to begin his major prose works, the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*.⁶⁹

3.2. The *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon*

The *Policraticus* is a work of ethical and political philosophy, while the *Metalogicon* is a defense of classical education. The two works are notably different in emphasis and scope, but there are compelling reasons to introduce them as a complementary pair. Not only were they both dedicated to Chancellor Thomas Becket,

⁶⁶ Ferruolo, pages 93- 130.

⁶⁷ John of Salisbury, *Entheticus*, 19.

⁶⁸ “Perhaps the greatest difficulty with dating Parts III and IV of the *Entheticus Maior* to any time after the middle of 1156 is the author’s evident fascination with the reign of King Stephen and its relative lack of comment on Henry’s court...That Stephen, not Henry, should be the central target of John’s wrath seems strange if the final version of the *Entheticus Maior* was stimulated by (John’s) banishment from his court in late 1156...Only if we accept that Parts III and IV of the *Entheticus Maior* were composed...before the tumultuous events of late 1156 can those sections of the text be understood in a historically coherent manner.” Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 18-19.

⁶⁹ “John’s direct encounter with the harm that courtly machinations might cause seems to have jolted him into a serious frame of mind. It was one thing to satirize the foibles and follies of the courtiers, as he had done in the *Entheticus Maior*. To have one’s career and reputation endangered by the whispers of some personal enemy, however, suggested the need for more serious consideration of his circumstances. Accordingly, John began at the end of 1156 to compose a prose work that attempted to demonstrate the foundations of the good human life.” Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 21-22.

and published in late 1159 as companion works but, as Nederman's chronology⁷⁰ of the writing of the two texts shows, John worked back and forth between the two texts for well over two years, i.e., "Thus, although separate in composition, the two treatises evolved in an organic relationship with each other, the ideas of one helping to bolster the doctrines of the other."⁷¹

In a letter sent in the autumn of 1156 to Pope Adrian IV (John's friend and fellow Englishman Nicholas Brakespear) John remarks: "You will, at such time as shall seem good to your excellency, repay the bishop of Lisieux for having aroused in his serene highness, our lord the king (Henry II), such a storm of indignation against myself, your servant, that it is not safe for me to remain in England, and impossible, or at least very difficult, for me to leave it."⁷² The reasons for Henry's displeasure remain unclear, but it likely arose from John's diplomatic mission to Rome the previous year, during which he was accused by Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux and a member at the time of Henry's inner circle, of using his influence with the pope to promote a political agenda for Canterbury, thereby undercutting Henry's influence over the English church.⁷³ John feared for his personal safety if he remained in England, but equally feared that a voluntary exile in France or elsewhere would be considered a de facto admission of guilt. In a later letter to Peter de Celle dated April 1157, John wrote that "the storm which threatened me has abated,"⁷⁴ but this direct threat to both his reputation and his person seems very likely

⁷⁰ Nederman proposes the following chronology:
Before mid-1157: *Metalogicon* Book 3; Book 4.1-6 (possibly also 4.7-41)
Late 1156 – mid-1157: *Policraticus* Book 7 pro. – 16; Book 7.25; Book 8.pro.-14;
Book 8.24; beginning of 8.25:
Mid-1157- late 1158: *Policraticus* Books 1-6, Book 7.17-.24, Book 8.15-23:
Late-1158-late 1159 *Metalogicon* Prologue, Books 1-2, Book 4.42.
Late 1159: *Policraticus* Prologue, end of Book 8.25.

⁷¹ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 27.

⁷² John, of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, Volume 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 1:30 (Letter 18).

⁷³ "It was in acquiescence to my petitions that Adrian granted and entrusted Ireland to the illustrious king of the English, Henry II, to be possessed by him and his heirs, as the papal letters still given evidence. This was by virtue of the fact that all islands are said to belong to the Roman Church, by an ancient right, based on the Donation of Constantine, who established and conceded this privilege. By me [Pope] Adrian dispatched a golden ring, set with a magnificent emerald whereby he invested [our] Henry II with the authority to rule Ireland." *Metalogicon*, 274-275.

⁷⁴ John of Salisbury, *Letters*, 1:51 (Letter 31).

the “jolt into seriousness” that prompted John to begin the task of answering two large questions: How is knowledge truly gained, and how should it be truly employed? The answer to the first is the *Metalogicon*, and to the second, the *Policraticus*.

In introducing the two-part *Entheticus* I dealt only with the longer *Maior*. The *Entheticus Minor*, also known as *Entheticus in Policraticum*, forms the short preface to the *Policraticus*. Laarhoven notes the seeming incongruity of using a poem to introduce a prose work, especially as the *Policraticus* follows the poem with a prose prologue introducing the work’s general themes. However, recall John’s darker and more serious tone in Part III of the *Entheticus Maior* as he transitions from the life of a student to that of a diplomat-courtier, only to realize personal and professional danger as his relationship with Henry II disintegrated. With that in mind it seems reasonable to consider the *Entheticus Minor* as John’s designed transition from the *Entheticus* to the *Policraticus*. It would identify the same intended audience, but signal to that audience a change in mood and scope.

With the *Policraticus*, we see once again the attraction of Greek-sounding titles. Nederman and Laarhoven agree that it seems simply to be the creation of an author who wished to add a certain authority to his work by giving it a name suggestive of classical Greek lineage.⁷⁵

The *Policraticus* is an extensive treatise, some 250,000 words in length. While focused principally on political ethics and morality, its length and scope allowed John to first explore the issue of how a good man threatened by bad politics can reclaim a good life, and second, to explore how society and government can be reformed to provide a good life for all men, princes and subjects alike.⁷⁶ Its final form was eight books: Books 1-3 a criticism of the “frivolities” of the courtiers; Books 4-6 a description of how the

⁷⁵ “The title *Policraticus*, a pseudo-Greek neologism, itself seems to have been invented by John in order to convey the implication of classical learning and erudition as well to capture the political content of the work.” Nederman, *Policraticus*, xv.

⁷⁶ “Commonly acclaimed as the first extended work of political theory written during the Latin Middle Ages...the *Policraticus* is however far more than a theoretical treatise on politics. It is equally a work of moral theology, satire, speculative philosophy, legal procedure, self-consolation, biblical commentary and deeply personal meditation. In sum, the *Policraticus* is the philosophical memoirs of one of the most learned courtier-bureaucrats of twelfth-century Europe.” Nederman, *Policraticus*, xv.

political community should be ordered; and Books 7-8 a survey of the various philosophical schools, and how each contributes to right (or wrong) action.⁷⁷

As Nederman's aforementioned chronology demonstrates, this order does not reflect the actual sequence of writing, Books 7 and 8 having likely been the first created. Recalling that John's physical and professional concerns over his estrangement from Henry's court in 1156 triggered the writing of the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon*, it is not surprising that his first drafts would be of the self-consoling nature, reminiscent of Boethius, suggested in Books 7 and 8. Once recalled to Canterbury following the "abatement of the storm," John would then work on what would be the main body of the *Policraticus*, namely what is wrong with the life of the courts, and how the community should be structured in order to prevent such wrong. It is important to remember that John dealt with many of these issues intellectually in the *Entheticus*, but without philosophical grounding or a plan of action while "[the *Policraticus*] is intended to have practical relevance and value by imparting to John's contemporaries a code of conduct applicable to the unsettled circumstances of the clerical administrator."⁷⁸

Perhaps most critical to his proposed code of conduct is his belief in moderation in all action, based principally on Aristotle's golden mean already espoused in the *Entheticus*.⁷⁹ Moderation allows the philosopher to approach all knowledge openly without, for example, immediately disowning pagan writers in favour of Christian ones. A moderate man cannot, by definition, be desirous of honours, and moderation blocks tyranny as the tyrant is, by nature, one who takes an extreme position, including that of an overly zealous Christian.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ The full title of the treatise is *Policraticus: of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*.

⁷⁸ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 55.

⁷⁹ John is considered by many to be the first medieval thinker to have access to the complete Latin translation of the *Organon*, Aristotle's six standard works on logic: *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. It was rediscovered in the west in the twelfth century through Greek and Arabic translations.

⁸⁰ In the *Policraticus* John will famously, and controversially, identify three types of tyrants: private, public, and ecclesiastical. The last reflects John's rueful knowledge that the cloister is no stranger to immoderate behaviour.

It is not surprising therefore that, as was the case with the *Entheticus* and will be with the *Metalogicon*, John was focused on finding intellectual support from the widest range of ancient authorities. All of his works featured substantial references from the Bible, Greek and Roman writers, and the patristic fathers (e.g., Origen and Tertullian). In the *Policraticus* his principal sources were the Old Testament (specifically the books of the prophets and of wisdom), Augustine, Jerome, Cicero, and Aristotle. The range and scope of John's references have led many to consider him the best-educated writer of the twelfth-century, but Janet Martin has done extensive work on John as a classical scholar, and argues convincingly that he followed the common writer's practice of reliance on *florilegia*, or collections of extracts taken from various authors, rather than the works themselves.⁸¹ In addition, Martin shows many cases where John has rewritten an extract to be more congruent with his point of view or, if a useful extract or authority could not be found, creating one of whole cloth. Perhaps the most egregious example is John's creation of "The Instruction of Trajan," a letter supposedly written to the emperor by Plutarch, and which introduced John's discussion in Books 5 and 6 about the republic as a "living" organism like the human body in which the parts are dependent on one another for survival. Martin argues that such invention was meant only to deceive the uneducated, and was a trait common to humanist writers.⁸² And the concept of the "body-politic" was certainly not new in John's time,⁸³ nor was John unique in editing or creating authorities.

⁸¹ For examples, see Martin's "John of Salisbury as Classical Scholar." *The world of John of Salisbury*, edited by Michael Wilks (Oxford: Published for the Ecclesiastical History Society by Basil Blackwell, 1984), 179-201.

⁸² "John regularly provided clues permitting his pseudo-classical inventions to be recognized as such by the learned reader. While deceiving the majority of his readers, he meant his cleverness to be manifest to a certain few, including his friends in the archbishop's curia and elsewhere...For John and his friends one of the important uses of the classical tradition, particularly the pseudo-classical inventions and other shared jokes, was precisely the reinforcement of their sense of being a learned elite." Martin, 196.

⁸³ "The...idea of the analogy between the community and the body is to be found (as early as) Aesop's fable of the Belly and the Members, in which the Hands and the Feet denounce the Belly for eating everything and doing nothing, and refuse to give it any more food, with the result that they waste away till they are too weak to feed the Belly even if they want to." Arnold Harvey, *Body politic: political metaphor and political violence* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 4.

John's use of authorities was most prevalent in *exempla*, stories told to illustrate a lesson. In order to suggest the code of conduct that is at the heart of the *Policraticus*, John must reduce philosophical principles from the abstract to the practical, i.e., "John's examples are oriented to the demonstration of how abstract principles of moral and political behavior may be employed in everyday life. Like the parables of Jesus in the New Testament, the *exempla* in the *Policraticus* teach."⁸⁴

John often used *exempla* in critical ways, recalling Abelard's *Sic et Non*.⁸⁵ Given his expressed admiration for Abelard, ancient authorities, and New Academy skepticism, John's use of contradiction is neither unusual nor unexpected.⁸⁶ For this reason it should not surprise the reader to see a contradiction, for example, between John's belief that the power of the authority comes from the nature of the man placed in authority, i.e., "John's conception of political power is an entirely personalized one: the incumbent makes the office,"⁸⁷ in contrast to the view of John's revered Augustine that the cleric's authority comes from the church office, rather than from the man himself.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 55.

⁸⁵ "Perhaps the most influential of all Abelard's logical works was his *Sic et Non*, in which a series of questions are posed, together with conflicting answers from patristic authorities. Though Abelard contented himself with merely collating the relevant passages from the Church Fathers, in his preface he set forth guidelines for comparison, logical scrutiny, and synthesis. The objective and rigorously dialectical methodology modeled in this work became a hallmark of Scholasticism." "Peter Abelard," *World Eras*. Volume 4 (Detroit: Gale Group, 2002), 423-424.

⁸⁶ Founded by Carneades (214 – 129/8 B.C.E.), the New Academy was a transition of traditional Platonism to a more moderate skepticism, "which admitted the possibility of well-founded opinions if not of certain knowledge." James Allen, "Carneades." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (First published August 11, 2004; substantive revision October 4, 2012), 1.

⁸⁷ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 60. (Also, "Rulership should not be by blood, but by merit; and he reigns uselessly who is born king without meriting it." John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 60.)

⁸⁸ In the Roman persecution of 304-305, long-established Christian communities in North Africa were forced to hand over their holy sacraments as an expression of repudiation of faith. Donatists held that churchmen who so gave up the sacraments had, by their actions, been traitorous to the church and, by so doing, lost all authority to carry out church functions – e.g., baptize, marry, or give last rites. Augustine charged the Donatists with heresy, saying that, even if the cleric's actions were in some way traitorous, any later church function carried out by that cleric was valid based on the authority of the office, not of the man. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a biography* (University of California Press, 2000), 203.

If, as John argues, contradiction is so often evident in all aspects of life, how does the good man make the correct choice? In the Prologue to the *Metalogicon*, John states: "Being an Academic in matters that are doubtful to a wise person, I cannot swear to the truth of what I say. Whether propositions may be true or false, I am satisfied with probable certainty."⁸⁹ In the *Metalogicon* John provided a veritable guide to *logica probabilis* through a defense of the classical education of the *trivium* as the "the key to logical analysis by means of which the understanding and discernment of the truth are most likely to be achieved...the *Metalogicon* is thus a necessary complement to the *Policraticus*."⁹⁰

Like the *Entheticus*, the *Metalogicon* began with an attack on educational careerists, led by the pseudonymous Cornificius, and again we are not surprised that John's depiction of Cornificius is contradictory. Presented as a real person, Cornificius is someone who had opposed John directly, and a person of "bloated gluttony, puffed-up pride, obscene mouth, rapacious greed, irresponsible conduct, loathsome habits...foul lust, dissipated appearance, evil life, and ill repute."⁹¹ But John also variously identified Cornificius as schoolmaster, monk, courtier, and businessman, and even his age seems to vary. While there are certain figures with whom John had contact who might seem "Cornifician," such as Arnulf of Lisieux, Cornificius was likely an amalgam of twelfth-century anti-intellectual attitudes and personalities, "a many-headed beast or a shape-shifter, a protean man, who adopts a range of guises, yet always begins from the same erroneous and dangerous assumptions about education."⁹²

John always returns to education as the key to a good life, and to that end in the *Metalogicon* he emphasized the absolute importance of the *trivium*: Latin grammar, including literature, poetry and prose; logic, to develop reason and rationality; and rhetoric, to express opinions clearly and persuasively. The Cornificians believed each to be a waste of time: grammar because it focuses on ancient writers whose ideas no longer have value, logic because it makes the simple idea overly complex and verbose,

⁸⁹ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 6.

⁹⁰ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 65.

⁹¹ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 12

⁹² Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 66.

and rhetoric because one's expository skills are naturally endowed and cannot be improved by study. John strongly and eloquently rebutted all three positions and, while the *Metalogicon* was not a twelfth-century educational syllabus, such as his near-contemporary Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon*, it certainly presented a framework for what a modern educator might term "curriculum development." But it is important to be reminded that John's goal was to go beyond the *Entheticus* and offer concrete guidelines to the good life, a life guided by both philosophy and Christian faith. John emphasized this early on: "I have purposely incorporated into this treatise some observations concerning morals, since I am convinced that all good things read or written are useless except insofar as they have a good influence on one's manner of life."⁹³

The philosophical side drew heavily from Aristotle, e.g., the need for moderation already mentioned. John also believed firmly in the Aristotelian necessity for social interaction, this being the only way in which man can develop his rationality. John certainly accepted that man is born with certain innate capacities but, unlike Cornificius, allows a second capacity: the ability to learn, to refine and improve upon the natural gift. He chided the Cornificians for self-contradiction by noting that skill in expression, the *sine qua non* for the courtier or cleric, and the most useful tool for career advancement, was developed only from the study of rhetoric.⁹⁴

For John a highly developed philosophical rationality was the faculty that turns knowledge into wisdom. This wisdom in turn allowed the wise man to perform the virtuous act, and thus to live the good life. But John returned to the conclusion of Part IV of the *Entheticus*, always grounding this anagogical path in grace: "It is grace alone that makes a man good. For grace brings about both the willing and the doing of good.

⁹³ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, 6.

⁹⁴ "One who can with facility and adequacy verbally express his mental perceptions is eloquent. The faculty of doing this is called 'eloquence.' For myself, I am at a loss to see how anything could be more generally useful: more helpful in acquiring wealth, more reliable for winning favor, more suited for gaining fame, than is eloquence." *Metalogicon*, 26.

Furthermore, grace, more than anything else, imparts the facility of writing and speaking correctly to those to whom it is given, and supplies them with the various arts.”⁹⁵

In his firm belief in man’s ability to learn, to reason, and to understand, John was very much a humanist but his was a twelfth-century humanism, still dependent on, and in service to, God.⁹⁶ And it is not at all surprising therefore that, in seeing the “knowledge” of his time to be a fractured thing, adrift from any true anagogical reality or reward, John found the breaking point in Scriptures. In the final chapter of the *Policraticus*, John states: “I recall to our minds the place where, having first gone astray, man was pushed and subverted so that he fell by divination from the commandment when, persuaded by the devil, he extended his rash and reckless hand towards the forbidden tree of knowledge.”⁹⁷ It is therefore death in Original Sin that fractured knowledge, and disrupted and disordered the anagogical path from knowledge to wisdom to virtue to salvation. But if this seems logical to the modern reader, John’s answer is purely enigmatic: “(Man) does not come back to life unless he returns to the tree of knowledge, and procures from it truth in learning, virtue in works, and life in joy.”⁹⁸ To analyze and explain John’s “return to the tree,” we must first consider the wider intellectual and political context of the twelfth century, and that is the purpose of the next chapter.

⁹⁵ *Metalogicon*, 65.

⁹⁶ E.g., “John is most commonly described as a humanist although he exhibits only some of the many different aspects of humanist thought and outlook. This mix of impulses gives his work a tone that is undoubtedly humanist, though it is a humanism on John’s own terms. He is most certainly not a humanist in the modern, secular sense; rather, his writings, values, and goals are all in service of his vision of the role of Christianity in the secular world.” Kevin Guilfooy, “John of Salisbury,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (First published July 6, 2005), 1.

⁹⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 42.

⁹⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 43.

4. Intellectual and Political Context

In the previous two chapters I have shown how John's personal circumstances – his ongoing lack of financial support, his disputes with Henry II and the resulting exiles, and his observations on the growing venality of church and crown service – were reflected in his writings throughout his life. However John's writings were influenced by more than his own personal circumstances and, in attempting to analyze his "return to the tree" conclusion in the *Policraticus*, it will be necessary to examine societal changes that affected John and his contemporaries, of whom I have chosen two, Hugh of Saint Victor and William of Conches, to show that John's unease with the education paradigm of his time was by no means unique. This context will provide a ground for analyzing John's "return to the tree," which follows in the next chapter.

John's life (1115/1120 – 1180 CE) neatly spans most of the twelfth century. In trying to review the forces that led to the "Twelfth-Century Renaissance," one is reminded of Southern's dictum, "the difficulty here lies not in any obscurity or lack of evidence, but in the multiplicity and complexity of the details."⁹⁹ The period was transitional in so many ways that one could profitably examine economics, agriculture, technology, even weather, to find explanations for the increases in population, emergence of national governments, expansion of trade, and the general stability and optimism that mark the period. Given that John's life was spent in diplomatic service for the church, and that his works reflect a general dissatisfaction with that experience, I have chosen to focus on one specific change, the growth in the power of the papacy in the period c. 1050 – 1300 CE. For the following discussion I am drawing on the extensive scholarship of R. W. Southern, principally *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (1970), and *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Volume One* (1995).

⁹⁹ R. W. Southern, *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe, Volume Two* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1995), 106.

The period following the collapse of the Roman Empire was characterized by a nearly complete lack of central government. Feudal society was based on vassalage to local lords, and interaction between feudal communities was minimal. The same situation applied to the church. Monasteries assumed many of the roles previously provided by central government, but monasteries were as isolated from one another, both by creed and circumstance, as feudal communities. Nicene Christianity having been established as the official state church of the Roman Empire, with Rome its locus, by the emperor Theodosius 1 (347 – 395 CE), the church was still a source of unity, but it was “a unity compatible with the very slightest exercise of administrative authority.”¹⁰⁰ The pope, nominally the head of the church, was in essence simply another regional bishop. By John’s time, however, the political and societal position of the church had changed from this loose coalition of monastic units to a highly organized, highly centralized quasi-state body, especially under the direction of expansionist popes such as Gregory VII and Innocent III.

The expansion of the church and the growth of papal power are subjects far too large for this thesis, but two factors should be noted in direct relation to John’s life and writing. First, the growth of the church mirrored the growth of secular states, and political alliances between church and state were often sought to the advantage of both. Second, canon law often served as the only source of jurisprudence in sorting out secular disputes over property rights. Canon lawyers and church-trained administrators were instrumental to the growth of secular states, and even before John’s lifetime lucrative careers lay within the burgeoning army of clerics and expert advisors. The path

¹⁰⁰ “The affairs of the church received little direction from Rome. Monasteries and bishoprics were founded, and bishops and abbots were appointed by lay rulers without hindrance or objection; councils were summoned by kings; kings and bishops legislated for their local churches about tithes, ordeals, Sunday observance, penance; saints were raised to the altars – all without reference to Rome. Each bishop acted as an independent repository of faith and discipline. They sought whatever advice was available from scholars and neighbouring bishops, but in the last resort they had to act on their own initiative.” Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 96.

to those careers was seen mainly through the study of law and business, the briefer the syllabus the better.¹⁰¹

Second, in presenting this brief overview of the growth of the papacy, a process definable historically both in origins and effects, it cannot be overlooked that the process of systematizing and codifying canon law was grounded in a much larger change in intellectual climate, a new acceptance of human reason within a Christian ethos, a certain dignity of human nature previously denied.¹⁰²

Inasmuch as the creation of mankind was the highest order of the natural world, this new belief in the essential dignity of human nature implied a larger acceptance of the dignity of the whole natural order and, more importantly, a belief that such dignity was intelligible. Such a belief “gives human minds access to the divine purpose in the Creation, and therefore, in some degree, access through reason, as well as Revelation, to the divine nature itself.”¹⁰³ These three aspects – the dignity of humanity, the dignity of nature, and the implied intelligibility of both – grounded the humanist impulse of the twelfth century and beyond. The texts that were the intellectual roots of medieval humanism were both many and varied, including works of science, religion, literature, poetry and philosophy, some known since antiquity, but many re-appearing through recovery of ancient texts unknown or thought lost. This rediscovery of a rich classical

¹⁰¹ “There is one fact which more than any other sums up this period of papal history: every notable pope from 1159 to 1303 was a lawyer...The popes retained the elements of a legal system on which (secular rulers) could build. Besides this they could claim a legislative authority to which no other ruler in the West could aspire. Every circumstance of twelfth-century society favoured the rapid growth of papal law.” Southern, *Western society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books, 1970), 132.

¹⁰² “That Man is a fallen creature, who has lost that immediate knowledge of God which was the central feature of human nature before the Fall; that human instincts are now deeply disturbed and are often in conflict with reason; that human beings are now radically disorganized and disoriented – all this is common ground to Christian thinkers...(By a systematic elaboration of the truths contained in all previous authorities) the (twelfth-century) expectation was that, when all had been gathered in, a very great part of the knowledge lost at the Fall would once more be available for the guidance and instruction of human beings.” Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, Volume Two (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1995), 22-23.

¹⁰³ R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 23.

heritage allowed medieval writers the widest scope of voices for exploring the new humanism, a notable example being Bernardus Silvestris's *Cosmographia*.¹⁰⁴

The recovery of the classical past was a combination of the preserved scholarship of the monasteries and the wealth of new translations from a rapidly expanding group of church-supported scholars, of whom Gerard of Cremona and James of Venice were key figures in re-introducing Aristotelian logic to the Latin West.¹⁰⁵

It is important to note that, while the new scholarship would soon lead into areas of controversy over Christian doctrine, e.g., Aristotle's natural philosophy, the drive to explore the self and nature came first from the church, specifically the monasteries, as monk-scholars such as Anselm of Bec (c. 1033 – 1109 CE) sought to find God in the living soul, rather than simply in the beyond. David Martin points out that an essential and "revolutionary" aspect of Christianity was the abrupt transition from an unimaginable

¹⁰⁴ "Bernard of Tours (c. 1085 – c. 1178) was a humanist who taught at Tours and was known as Bernardus Silvestris...Very little else is known of his life except that he taught the art of writing and wrote an *Ars Versificatoria*, which has not been found...His most famous work, dedicated to Theodoric of Chartres in about 1150, is the *Cosmographia*, an allegory in prose and verse on the origin of the world and man." David Luscombe, "Bernard of Tours," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006), 592.

¹⁰⁵ "Gerard of Cremona: Translator from Arabic into Latin; b. Cremona, Italy, c. 1114; d. Cremona, 1187. After completing early studies in Italy, he was attracted by the new learning available in Toledo, which had been recaptured by the Christians in 1085. Under the auspices of Raymond of Sauvetât, Archbishop of Toledo (1126–51), the city became a lively center of scientific studies and translations. Ancient catalogues credit him with more than 70 works...(including) translations of Aristotle, Avicenna, Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Euclid, and Ptolemy. Among his more important contributions were his translation of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*; Aristotle's *De naturali auditu*, *Liber caeli et mundi*, *De generatione*, and *Meteora*... Through these translations the West came to know a new Aristotle and the best of Greek medicine, astronomy, and mathematics that had long been known and developed by the Muslims." P. Glorieux, "Gerard of Cremona," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 161.

"James of Venice: James was probably the most important of the scholars on whose work the knowledge of Aristotle's writings in the Latin Middle Ages depended. He was the first to translate the *Physics*, *De anima*, *Metaphysics* (at least books I-IV.4, possibly all fourteen books)...He was perhaps the first to translate the epistemological treatise *Posterior Analytics*...James provided the link between the Greek philosophical schools in Constantinople and those of the Latin West... in the second half of the twelfth century, his translations reached Normandy; copies of some of them, written in Mont-Saint-Michel before the end of the century, still survive. John of Salisbury knew at least one of them and asked for others." "James of Venice also known as Iacobus Veneticus Grecus," *Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008), 65-67.

God whose very name cannot be spoken, to a highly visible human exemplar with a common name. By making God conceivable, at least in some form, the search for self became, in Martin's opinion, core to the Christian faith.¹⁰⁶ And while disputed, that the search should include even ancient pagan authorities was also established as core. This is the fundamental doctrinal question posed famously by the Early Church Father Tertullian (c. 160 - 230 CE) when he asked: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, or the Academy with the Church?"¹⁰⁷ Augustine's response in *City of God* is perhaps the most formative. Given that he was Roman educated, an unabashed admirer of the moralist Cicero, and heavily influenced by Neoplatonism, it is not surprising that Augustine conceived a direct link from pagans to Christianity, e.g., "Certain of our brethren in Christ's grace are amazed to read that Plato had an understanding of God, which as they see, is in many respects consistent with the truth of our religion."¹⁰⁸ For Augustine, the best of the pagan philosophers understood the existence of a divine nature, but failed to recognize it as monotheistic, while the Jews recognized the divine monotheistic nature but refused to accept the Incarnation. In this way Christianity was given historical credence, each prior religio-philosophical stage lacking the authority of revelation, but each worthy of consideration to understand the anagogic path. The value of ancient authorities might not have been stated more cogently than with the inscription at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi: "Know thyself." Southern notes that even St. Bernard,

¹⁰⁶ David X. Martin, "The Myth of the Secular, part 2," *CBC Ideas*, broadcast October 23, 2012. Radio.

¹⁰⁷ "Fideism' is the name given to that school of thought—to which Tertullian himself is frequently said to have subscribed—which answers that faith is in some sense independent of, if not outright adversarial toward, reason. In contrast to the more rationalistic tradition of natural theology, with its arguments for the existence of God, fideism holds that reason is unnecessary and inappropriate for the exercise and justification of religious belief." Richard Amesbury, "Fideism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), 1.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo, *The city of God against the pagans* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 312.

the implacable foe of much of the new humanist thinking, rooted his entire theory of spiritual growth in self-knowledge.¹⁰⁹

Study of the ancient authorities was therefore always valuable if the medieval scholar understood the potential contradictions and shortcomings, but how was he to do so? Mentorship of the highest quality, of course, but in the twelfth century the *trivium* was the foundation for making critical judgments on a text. Grammar allowed the student to define and categorize the words contained in statements, logic to judge the validity of arguments made by the statements, and rhetoric to express coherent counter-arguments. The study of logic in the Latin West was not new to the twelfth century, Alcuin having written the first medieval logic textbook (*On Dialectic*) in about 790 CE but, until approximately 1130, logicians had only what became known as *logica vetus* (“old logic”) from which to work: Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, and Boethius's commentaries and textbooks. But the new Latin translations (*logica nova* – “new logic”) of Aristotle's full *Organon* by Gerard of Cremona and James of Venice became the foundational tool for learning the analytical skills necessary for the evaluation of texts and, as earlier mentioned, John of Salisbury is considered by many scholars to be the first twelfth-century writer to have access to the entire *Organon*.

Therefore, while John's political environment was shaped by the rise of the papacy as a *quasi*-state body, the intellectual environment in which he studied, worked and wrote was shaped by at least three fundamental changes: a new belief in the dignity and rational intelligibility of both man and nature, a rebirth of the perceived value of ancient authorities, and the burgeoning availability of access to ancient texts. I have already discussed Abelard's controversial engagement with the new environment, and wish now to briefly show how John shared the concerns of two of his contemporaries,

¹⁰⁹ “St. Bernard, who would have thought himself an enemy of humanism, was basing his whole programme of spiritual growth on the ancient maxim, 'Know thyself.' In pursuit of this programme, Bernard found a positive value in self-love, and his programme for growing in the knowledge and love of God was based on the gradual refinement of self-love until it developed into love one's neighbour, and by further refinement, love of God.” *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe*, 27.

Hugh of Saint Victor and William of Conches. I will then place John within that new environment of both intellectual culture and educational criticism.

Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon* begins: "Of all things to be sought, the first is that Wisdom in which the form of the Perfect Good stands fixed."¹¹⁰ Written c. 1125 CE, the *Didascalicon* begins with that blending of Neoplatonism and Christianity that grounded the thinking of the early Middle Ages, here seen by the Platonic Form exemplified in divine Wisdom, the Trinitarian Spirit. While it is a response firmly within a monastic tradition, the twelfth-century humanist ethos stands close at hand.¹¹¹ Noting the "dignity of our nature which all naturally possess in equal measure, but which all do not equally understand," Hugh declares that, "we are restored through instruction, so that we may recognize our nature and learn not to seek outside ourselves what we can find within."¹¹² The innate dignity of nature and self is fully evident, but Hugh adds a gentle admonition that the external is always secondary to the process of self-realization. First, rightly ordered knowledge leads to wisdom, and wisdom prompts virtuous acts through a developed moral consciousness that chooses good from evil. For Hugh, this conscience is nothing more than a dialogue with self and, by extension, with God.¹¹³ Acting in accordance with the moral conscientiousness leads to salvation. The other anagogic path has already been noted by St. Bernard; enlightened self-love allows love of others, and finally love of God. Grace allows understanding to begin, and reading is

¹¹⁰ Hugh, of Saint-Victor, *Didascalicon: a medieval guide to the arts*, translated from the Latin with an introduction and notes by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 46.

¹¹¹ Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1142) was a regular canon of the Abbey of Saint-Victor, Paris, and influential thinker with lasting and decisive contributions to biblical exegesis, theology, and spirituality. The date and place of Hugh's birth are unknown. By 1125 he was at Saint-Victor teaching in the abbey school, where he founded the vigorous and creative Victorine intellectual tradition...He united in a special way a religious vocation, keen intellectual curiosity, a strong historical sense, theological creativity, and dedication to the contemplative life...In biblical studies Hugh introduced the idea that history, allegory, and tropology, the traditional three levels of meaning in the biblical text, should be seen as three areas of study to be pursued in succession. This idea had the important effect of making the systematic study of the historical, literal meaning of the text the foundation for all further biblical study." Grover Zinn, "Hugh of Saint-Victor," *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 4150.

¹¹² Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 47.

¹¹³ John states: "Philosophy pounds at the gate of wisdom and, when it is opened, the soul is illuminated by the sweet light of things and the name of philosophy vanishes." *Policraticus*, 82.

the manner in which one allows grace entry. Reading is essentially a healing act, an essential remedy. Ivan Illich explains, “The need of fallen humanity for reunion with wisdom is central to Hugh’s thought. That makes the concept of *remedium*, remedy or medicine, crucial for an understanding of Hugh.”¹¹⁴ The remedy rests in the book, or rather, the illuminated manuscript. The book is medicine for the human eye, an eye clouded when Adam and Eve were driven from paradise. The process of *lectio* (divine reading) is not simply an intellectual process; the reader metaphorically consumes the illuminated word.¹¹⁵ Through reading/consuming the Word, the eye is healed as the light of wisdom causes the page to glow and, in this glow, the reader sees himself illuminated, and self-knowledge begins, first by understanding the text’s historical meanings, then the allegorical, and finally the tropological.¹¹⁶ That this process lasts a lifetime is a given, e.g., “The old age of those who have formed their youth upon creditable pursuits acquires greater polish through experience, greater wisdom with the passage of time, and reaps the sweetest fruits of former studies.”¹¹⁷

Since it aims always at the reunion of man and divine Wisdom, Hugh’s mystical engagement with the book, requiring a lifetime of disciplined, meditational effort, seems an unlikely place in which to find the highly structured, codified summaries so basic to, for example, the new canon law. So it comes as a surprise to find that much of the *Didascalicon* is a straightforward guide to what and how to read, in essence a syllabus, identifying specific content and suggesting appropriate method. The goal is still an anagogic path to enlightenment but Hugh is offering efficiencies, one might even say

¹¹⁴ Ivan Illich, *In the vineyard of the text: a commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 10-11.

¹¹⁵ Among Hugh’s many biblical references to the “consuming of the word” is Ezekiel 1: “Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.” KJV, *Ezekiel* 1:1-3.

¹¹⁶ “In the divine utterance are placed certain things which are intended to be understood spiritually only, some things that emphasize the importance of moral conduct, and certain things said according to the simple sense of history....It is necessary, therefore, so to handle the Sacred Scripture that we do not try to find history everywhere, nor allegory everywhere, nor tropology everywhere but rather we assign individual things fittingly in their own places, as reason demands.” Hugh of St, Victor, *Didascalicon*, 121

¹¹⁷ Hugh of St, Victor, *Didascalicon*, 98

shortcuts, along the path. Two brief examples will suggest the tone. In discussing the primary level of meaning, the historical, Hugh states:

You ask if I have any opinion about the books which are useful for this study. I think the ones to be studied most are: Genesis, Exodus, Josue, the Book of Judges, and that of Kings, and Paralipomenon; of the New Testament, first the four Gospels, then the Acts of the Apostles. These eleven have more to do with history than do the others.¹¹⁸

And when discussing the reading of the Gospels Hugh suggests a ten-column table as follows:

This is how (Gospel) tables are to be used: throughout each Evangelist, a certain number is fixed in the margin besides small sections of text, and under such numbers is placed a certain space marked in red and indicating in which of the tables one will find the section number to which that space is subjoined. For example, if the space indicated is the first, this number will be found in the first table; if the second, in the second; if the third, in the third; and so through the series till one comes to the tenth.¹¹⁹

We are here far removed from the solitary monk reading, memorizing, meditating on, and “consuming,” the text, in the light of the revealed self. From a viewpoint of educational pedagogy, Hugh’s designated reading lists and annotated tables would not be out of place in a modern classroom. But in the preface of the *Didascalicon* Hugh has alerted us to his primary goal: “There are many persons whose nature has left them so poor in ability that they can hardly grasp with their intellect even easy things.”²⁴ While rooted in the twelfth-century monastic tradition, the *Didascalicon* aimed principally to be a learning aid to these students, whether their lack of ability arises from “not knowing or not wishing to know.”¹²⁰ But what criticisms there are, of either students, teaching

¹¹⁸ Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 137. “*Paralipomenon*” is the Greek name for the *Hebrew Bible’s Dibh're Hayyamim*, which appears in the modern Bible as *Chronicles 1 & 2*.

¹¹⁹ *Didascalicon*, 112.

¹²⁰ *Didascalicon*, 43.

masters, or educational pedagogy, are gentle ones, something that cannot be said of our second critic, William of Conches.¹²¹

My first chapter made a brief mention of the charges of heresy that were levelled at William of Conches by William of St-Thierry. Some additional discussion of these charges is necessary to ground William's *Dragmaticon Philosophiae* (hereafter *Dragmaticon*, c. 1148). Soon after the start of his teaching career (c. 1125), William produced the *Philosophia*, a work as comprehensive as the title suggests,¹²² that sought an understanding of both "the incorporeal entities beyond comprehension [and] the corporeal entities, whether they have divine or earthly and perishable bodies."¹²³ It included his argument that the Genesis account of creation can be reconciled with the *Timaeus* and contemporary science, and his discussion of the latter including geology, meteorology, astronomy, and biology. It ended with a discussion of humanity as a microcosm of the universe, from conception to old age. Around 1140 a copy of the *Philosophia* wound up in the hands of William of St-Thierry, who was at that very moment actively and energetically raising heresy charges against Abelard. While his reading of the *Philosophia* seems to have been somewhat sketchy in comparison to his reading of Abelard, St-Thierry sensed that the *Philosophia* reflected similar heretical

¹²¹ "William of Conches, the twelfth-century Chartrian philosopher, was born at Conches in Normandy at the end of the eleventh century. He probably studied under Bernard of Chartres, learning at least grammar from him, and began teaching in the early 1120s...John of Salisbury was one of his pupils; John found him perpetuating the spirit of Bernard's own teaching. However, opposition from less lettered philosophers led William to return to his native Normandy under the protection of Duke Geoffrey Plantagenet..Much of William's philosophical effort was directed toward ensuring that Christian theology embraced the study of the universe and of man. He saw in Plato's *Timaeus* a doctrine of creation that helped to explain the account given in the book of Genesis...He firmly underlined St. Paul's teaching on the intelligibility of this world (*Romans 1:20*). The created universe bears the imprint of its creator, and its harmony reveals the fundamental attributes of God—power, wisdom, and goodness." Luscombe, "Bernard of Tours," 592-593.

¹²² See Paul Edward Dutton, "The Little Matter of a Title: *Philosophia Magistri Willelmi de Conchis*," (Firenze: SISMEL Edizione del Galluzzo, 2011).

¹²³ Dutton, "The Little Matter of a Title," 474.

tendencies.¹²⁴ Accordingly he also attempted to raise heresy charges against William of Conches.

These charges were not carried through to trial as in the similar cases of Abelard and Gilbert of Poitiers,¹²⁵ but the criticism levelled against him by the church orthodoxy likely was key to his leaving Chartres to return to Normandy to the court of Geoffrey the Fair, duke of Normandy and count of Anjou, where his duties included tutoring the future king of England, the young Henry II. Noting that Geoffrey assumed the dukedom in 1144 and passed it to Henry in 1149, and that William's very first sentence of the *Dragmaticon* specifically identifies the "venerable" duke, Ronca and Curr conclude that the *Dragmaticon* was written between 1147-1149.¹²⁶

William's prologue refers to the *Philosophia* as an imperfect book, "as it was composed in our imperfect youth," and suggests that the purpose of the *Dragmaticon* was, "to retain whatever is true in [the *Philosophia*], to condemn its falsehoods, and to supply its omissions."¹²⁷ However the *Dragmaticon* was anything but a chastened apology. The opening sentence of the prologue introduced a dialogue with duke Geoffrey, answering a purported question from the duke as to why teachers are less trusted than in times past. William's answer immediately recalls the "pugnacious" and "provocative" tone that Dutton finds in the *Philosophia*.¹²⁸ Teachers, according to William, required two things: the mental capacity not to deceive himself, and the moral quality not to wish to deceive others. But he concludes, "because virtually everyone of

¹²⁴ "There can be little doubt that St-Thierry was genuinely shocked by Conches's *Philosophia*, seeing in it the dangerous drift of the schools and the Liberal Arts into religious matters. If Abelard had moved from dialectic to theology, where his analytical thought seemed to violate the boundaries of proper talk about God, Conches seemed to subsume God and scriptural truth within the workings of the natural world. His governing principle remained one committed to a rational explanation of the world." Dutton, *The mystery of the missing heresy trial of William of Conches*, 7.

¹²⁵ For a detailed summary of the charges against William and the legalities that followed, see Dutton.

¹²⁶ William, of Conches, *A dialogue on natural philosophy = Dragmaticon philosophiae* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) 3.

¹²⁷ *Dragmaticon*, 5.

¹²⁸ See Dutton, *The mystery of the missing heresy trial of William of Conches*, 8.

our time approaches the office of teaching without these two qualities, they are themselves the reason why they are less trusted.”¹²⁹

William’s scorn is also directed at students who, unwilling to discipline themselves for the many years of work required of the classical scholar, “study carelessly for the space of a single year and think that the whole of wisdom has accrued to them, whereas they have merely snatched rags from it.”¹³⁰ Lastly, William blames the prelates, especially the bishops, whose primary goal seems to be the enhancement of their material wellbeing and status.¹³¹ What is disowned by these self-serving careerists is the discipline of the natural sciences, and the *Dragmaticon* is essentially a highly detailed introduction to the natural sciences, albeit firmly set in Christian terms.¹³²

Of the *Dragmaticon*’s six books (176 pages in English translation), Books 1 – 5a deal with the creation of the universe – planets, weather, etc., while Book 5b (“Man”) describes in detail the physiological functions of the human body. However, the final chapter of Book 5b (“Teaching and Learning”) returns to William’s introductory discontent with educational pedagogy by his discussion of the proper intent of teaching, the proper attitude of students, and the proper order of learning. It was therefore a survey of twelfth-century natural sciences, beginning with a criticism of the educational process, and ending with William’s view of proper learning. While the science of the *Dragmaticon* was in many ways an academic syllabus, the conclusion was a moral treatise on attitude and intention of those involved in education: teachers whose primary

¹²⁹ *Dragmaticon*, 3.

¹³⁰ *Dragmaticon*, 4. See also John’s comment: “Having prematurely seated themselves in the master’s chair, they blush to descend to the pupil’s bench.” *Metalogicon*, 17.

¹³¹ John was equally contemptuous of ambitious churchmen, e.g. “Scribes and Pharisees sit within Rome, placing upon the shoulders of men insupportable burdens with which they themselves do not dirty their own fingers...they pile up gold and silver at the bank, even economizing too much in their own expenses out of avarice.” *Policraticus*, 133

¹³² “DUKE. Yesterday as I remember, you promised that you would demonstrate how God created...those four bodies that are now called elements. Therefore keep your promise. PHILOSOPHER. He brought together the hot and dry particles, which had been mixed with the others. From these particles, and by adding others from the three remaining types of particles, He created one body, which because of the parts prevailing in it, is called fire. Then He drew down to a lower place, the cold and particles and from them, with the addition of some others, He formed a single body, massy and dense, called earth from the parts prevailing in it. From the hot and moist particles, but together with some of the others, He formed the air; from the cold and moist particles, water.” *Dragmaticon*, 22.

love should be wisdom, rather than remuneration or fame; students who should recognize their lack of wisdom and be prepared to spend the time and effort to gain it; and the understanding of both parties that the process of learning should consume one's entire life.¹³³

While intended for the edification of the monks at St. Victor, the originality of Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon* "lie[s] in the adaptation of an already current Aristotelian division of philosophy within a system of thought and action radically Augustinian, attentively orthodox, and mystically oriented."¹³⁴ William's uncompromising defence of natural science nevertheless concludes "it is through the knowledge of the creatures that we arrive at the knowledge of the Creator."⁴⁸ What is common to both is a linear view of creation, universe to earth to mankind. Creation is anagogic, and the purpose of all human activity - physical, mental, or spiritual - should be the return, i.e., salvation.¹³⁵

John of Salisbury shared this context. In company with William of Conches, he polemicized against the careerist Cornificius, and his *Metalogicon* was as much a handy syllabus to the potential student as was the *Didascalicon* or the *Dragmaticon*. Like Silvestris's *Cosmographia*, his early *Entheticus* offered poetic language in a Neoplatonic structure albeit, as earlier mentioned, he considered the poetic form inadequate for his purpose (and/or perhaps recognized his lesser ability at poetry as opposed to prose.) Much of the *Metalogicon* is a presentation and defence of Aristotelian logic and rationalism, but he ends the penultimate chapter:

¹³³ *Dragmaticon*, 173-175.

¹³⁴ *Didascalicon*, 8.

¹³⁵ In researching the anagogic concept of creation, I came across the following from the Hindu *Mundaka Upanishad*, written perhaps as early as the second millennium BCE: "As from a well-stoked fire sparks fly by the thousands, all looking just like it, So from the imperishable issue diverse things, and into it, my friend, they return." (*Upanishads*, 271.) While this appears to align with medieval anagogic Christianity, and while there is some very tentative research suggesting that classical Greece might have had some knowledge of Hindu theology, I am restrained by Adam Gopnik who, in a recent book review in the *New Yorker*, noted that, in writing history, "If you compress and expand a time scale just as you like, you can make any event look inevitable." Adam Gopnik, "Faces, Places, Spaces: The renaissance of geographic history" (*The New Yorker* 29 October and 5 November 2012), 111.

Since not only man's senses, but even his reason frequently err, the law of God has made faith the primary and fundamental prerequisite for understanding of the truth. Which is appropriately epitomized by Philo in the Book of Wisdom: 'Those who trust in the Lord shall understand the truth, and those who persevere faithfully in love shall rest tranquil in Him.'¹³⁶

In returning to the question of John's use of the "return to the tree" we must therefore place it in a transitional context in which there was a growing reliance on rational inquiry, ancient authorities, and the use of many interpretive voices and frameworks. These transitions notwithstanding, John's world was still very much a Christian world, and it seems only logical that his message was framed in a Christian milieu. With that said, we must not forget that John was by inclination a teacher and diplomat trained to give practical advice, and we should look for a practical interpretation of a "return to the tree." That is the purpose of my next chapter.

¹³⁶ *Metalogicon*, 273.

5. Analysis: Returning to the Tree

In 1159 at the end of the great writing project that led him to produce both the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus*, John of Salisbury in the last chapter of the *Policraticus* (Book 8, Chapter 25) turns reflective, as if to explain the point of his vast expanse of words over two books. Where did it all lead? In his concluding pages, he reflects on his life, on the purpose of his intellectual journey, and on the Christian life of fallen man. Though the passage is long, it needs to be printed in full here so that we can slowly attempt to return to the Tree with John and to try to make sense of his great resolution and resolve.

His is the path of virtue, set between and confined to two boundaries, namely, the knowledge and practice of goodness. For to know the good and not to do it is not the path to happiness but is deserving of damnation. For this reason you say: how may I who am without a path and not on the path advance along this path? Among a great variety of paths, how may I, a foreigner and a stranger whose eyes are enfeebled on account of deprivation and are at present almost extinguished, discern the signposts so that the tranquillity and joy you promised may be reached? I answer

'There is an elevated path manifested when the heavens are fair; it has the name of the Milky Way.'¹³⁷

Your fair heavens will not be unsettled before the eyes of your soul on account of indignation and you will easily recognize this milky path. Return to yourself, look towards the chronicles of the Fathers, and then consider diligently where you diverted your steps from the path and where you first fell into error.

I recall to our minds the place where, having first gone astray, man was pushed and subverted so that he fell by deviation from the commandment when, persuaded by the devil, he extended his rash and reckless hand towards the forbidden tree of knowledge. From then on 'sin, accepting the opportunity of the commandment, seduced me and through the

¹³⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.168.

commandment killed me.¹³⁸ The commandment itself stimulated all desire in me because always 'we strive for the forbidden'; and 'what is not allowed irritates more keenly.'¹³⁹ Man extends his hand towards the tree of knowledge, satisfies his gluttony, and contrary to the promise of the deceitful enemy and in accordance with the injunction of the truthful God, he is plunged into darkness and thrown to the ground in hunger, making a compact with death and creating a covenant with hell. Knowledge of good and evil is achieved through experience, and he made a place in himself for many miseries. Therefore, while prohibited, he nevertheless climbed and fell from the tree of knowledge and strayed from truth, virtue and life, and he does not come back to life unless he returns to the tree of knowledge, and procures from it truth in learning, virtue in works and life in joy. And so he is to exercise the subtlety of his reason so that he may distinguish between good and evil and recognize whether good or evil is preponderate in each thing. Then he is to look out with constant attention so that he does not act like an inferior sort of person but instead is devoted to preferable kinds of conduct through the exertion of his whole mind and body. Moreover, his labour may be sweetened and all the bitterness of the present world may be tempered (as the blessed Gregory asserts) by the hope of things to come. For even the prophet is fed day and night with tears in anticipation of his God; and to those who grieve, Truth, which neither deceives nor is deceived, promises true happiness in return. And one is not to be afraid to extend a hand toward the tree of knowledge of good and evil on account of the example of the first prohibition because He who teaches men knowledge and who according to the promises of the prophet, discloses to the ignorant what is good, invites exiles and wanderers to it. Therefore, in the tree of knowledge is found a certain branch of virtue, through which the whole life of man as he progresses is consecrated. No one except for him who extends the branch of virtue cut from the tree of knowledge may return by other means to the Creator of life, namely, God...

Clearly, he who tears off the branch of good works from the tree of knowledge alone knows what sorrow is concealed on the earth or what can be obtained from it. And when it is removed another is not lacking, since the more knowledge and virtue are practiced, the more they are renewed and progressed. Yet I do not follow the steps of Virgil or the gentiles to such a degree that I believe that anyone may attain to knowledge or virtue by the strength of his own will. I acknowledge that grace is operative in both the will and the accomplishments of the elect; I revere it as the way – indeed, the only true way – which leads to life and renders satisfaction to each one's good wishes. This is the milky way manifested by the splendour of innocence, and its devotion to nutrition fulfils the duties of the wet nurse and alone prepares for progress; for without it no one progresses. This message is announced to

¹³⁸ KJV, Romans 7:11.

¹³⁹ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.4.17, 2.19.3.

transgressors with the sound of a trumpet, so that they may return to the heart. It is promised to them that 'the revolving and flaming sword' will be removed from the tree of knowledge so that they may be led and enter into their native country.¹⁴⁰ I might say more. The tree of knowledge and the wood of life, in which all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed and in which dwells corporally the fullness of divinity, is pulled up (yet with its substance uncut) and is taken out of the land of our wandering and is planted in the midst of our Church, so that from it there might be illumination through knowledge, strength through virtue and exultation through mercy; and the joy of the Church is to be complete, joy from God and in God, joy that no one may detract from it.

Therefore he who, distracted by desire, transgresses against the tree is to approach the tree, guided by grace, since our salvation is procured from grace in the wood of the cross because in the past death has proceeded from the tree, But it is to be approached by a different route, since it is expedient that different sorts of things are to be treated in different ways. And because man would not have been hurled down by the tempter unless passion had taken precedence in his mind, he for this reason understands by means of fear that one who desires to be exalted on the day of the visitation is to be humbled before the power of the hand of God. Let him who has already tasted illicit fruits abstain from unlawful things, and let him pacify burning desire by well-disposed charity. He is to delight in these things; he may see even now that the tree is beautiful in appearance and sweet to eat, and that it will give in its own time the fruit of true happiness and the condition of an ever joyful life of tranquillity.¹⁴¹

It is not easy to unravel the meaning of John's "return to the tree" imagery, but it was obviously of critical importance to his message and to understanding of the way for Christians, especially the courtiers who haunted the royal court and the students who filled the schools of Europe. For one thing, John of Salisbury's "return to the tree" requires an interpretation of Genesis 1-3, one that will require us to look at the fundamental issues raised by the earliest development of the ideas of the first man, the Fall, the Tree, and the text of the Bible as John received it. While John was certainly a medieval Christian who believed in redemption through grace, his humanism demands an Adam motivated by more than simple disobedience and lust. For John's story is Adam's story; the "return to the tree" must be universally possible for the "first father" as well all of his descendents. I will further argue that John felt comfortable developing this

¹⁴⁰ KJV, Genesis, 3:24.

¹⁴¹ *Policraticus*, 226-228.

interpretation because of two factors, the humanist rediscovery and new appreciation of ancient texts, and the influence of his first master, Peter Abelard.

Like the majority of scholars of his era, John had little knowledge of Greek, and one can posit that he had no other ancient languages. However, as already noted, the humanist impulse of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was marked by a new interest in ancient texts, and the production of substantial commentary on those texts. While this commentary originated outside western Europe, often from Muslim scholars, we should recall that the Spanish *reconquista* allowed access to translations of both texts and commentaries for Europeans. While a definitive bibliography of John's personal library is as yet unavailable, I believe we can surmise with reasonable assurance that he had access through the extensive library at Canterbury to the *Hebrew Bible* and the *Septuagint*, if only in Latin translation by Jerome.¹⁴² This would have allowed him three different bases for exploring Genesis: the rabbinic tradition of Palestinian Judaism, the Hellenistic tradition following the Diaspora (from writers such as Philo of Alexandria), and the later Christian tradition. This would have been important because, as Aron notes: "it is the interpretation of the Eden text more than any other in the book of Genesis that differentiates Christian from Jewish understanding."¹⁴³ In the discussion following I am relying heavily on recent scholarship but do so with the assumption that, while we do not

¹⁴² "Jerome's voluminous writings fall into four broad groups: translations and studies of the Bible, polemics, historical works, and letters. By far the most important category deals with scripture, his towering achievement being his Latin translation of the Bible. Known as the Vulgate, it became the authorized version of the Bible in the Latin church. For the New Testament, Jerome corrected the Old Latin versions of the Gospels in the light of earlier Greek manuscripts. His work on the Old Testament took a more complicated course. He began by relying on the Septuagint, but the more familiar he became with Hebrew the more determined he was to base his translations on the Hebrew text. The result was a far more accurate version of the Old Testament than anything theretofore available in Latin." John Buckler, "Jerome," *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: MacMillan Reference USA, 2005), 4832-4834.

¹⁴³ E.g., "In the entire Hebrew Bible there is no reference to Eden's being a place where the first couple sinned, nor is there any reference to the Fall of mankind or to sin's being introduced into a previously unmarred world. There is also no mention of how the first couple's sin was transmitted to future generations, no reference to sexual desire as being the cause of disobedience and exile. Much of this is of course to be found in the Apocrypha and in later Hellenistic and Christian literature, but the sin, the Fall, inherited sinfulness, and sexuality as evil never became as dominant in Jewish tradition as in Christian belief." Lewis Aron, "The Tree of Knowledge: Good and Evil: Conflicting Interpretations", *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives* (2005), 685. For overviews of the Diaspora and its effect on Biblical exegesis, see McKenzie or Stern.

know exactly how John interpreted the Fall, his “return to the tree” required a re-reading of Adam’s nature, one that focused more on human potential than on punishment. I believe Genesis 1-3 allows such a re-reading, and that the following interpretation is one that John could easily have made, albeit in different language.

The concept of paradise, from the ancient Persian *pairi-daēza* (an enclosure wall, or the space therein enclosed), is an integral part of the creation mythologies of many pre-Christian cultures.¹⁴⁴ The concept usually entails two aspects: an earthly realm where humans are, or can be, immortal, and the loss of this blessed condition due to some sort of fall, a transition “recognized as a decline or degradation when contrasted to the original state of humankind and the cosmos.”¹⁴⁵

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biblical scholarship posited that the earliest complete Torah derived from four separate and independent sources, which were termed, in chronological order, the Yahwist/Jahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomist (D), and the Priestly Writers (P). The combining of these four traditions leads to some inconsistencies in the narrative, one of which I will examine shortly, but more to the point is establishing the chronology of the creation story. It is now generally agreed that of the four sources, only two, J and P, contribute to the three parts of Genesis 1-11, often referred to as the Bible’s “primeval age.” These are the Creation and Fall, the story of the Flood, and the emergence of Abraham.

Steiner believes that the J tradition of the tenth century BCE supplied the underlying structure and theological bearing to Genesis 1-11, but that with the P tradition some five hundred years later, the narrative “underwent a formative process of reshaping and rethinking.”¹⁴⁶ Since my analysis deals only with the biblical account of the Creation and Fall, the effect of J and P readings can be limited to Genesis 1-3. The J tradition is considered the source of 2.4b – 3.24 (creation of man and woman, paradise,

¹⁴⁴ Walter Denny, "Paradise on Earth," *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), 1718.

¹⁴⁵ Julian Ries, "The Fall," *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 2561.

¹⁴⁶ L. Steiner, "Primeval Age in the Bible," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 709.

temptation, and fall), while the P tradition is the source of 1.1-2.4a (creation of world).¹⁴⁷ The salient point of this chronology is to note that the story of the Fall comes from a much older tradition than the Creation story that now precedes it in Genesis.

One of the potential inconsistencies mentioned above is the existence in Genesis of two different accounts of the creation of man and woman. Genesis 1.27 says: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Later Genesis 2.21-2.23 states: “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”¹⁴⁸

In the first account man and woman are created together, while in the second woman is literally made from man. Given that the latter is the older story, one wonders why the P tradition redactors chose to add the former and keep both.

Traditional interpretations have suggested that Genesis 2.21-2.23 is set simply as a more detailed and elaborate version of Genesis 1.27, but this doesn’t seem likely in at least two ways. First, 2:21-2.23 stands fully independently as a story, and doesn’t require a preamble like 1.27. Second, and more importantly in my view, such an interpretation severely discounts the subtlety and creativity of the P tradition writers, who knew that the Creation and Fall would be foundational stories, and had five hundred years to consider presentation. I prefer to believe that the two stories are meant to exemplify two aspects of Adam’s nature, an animal/rational dichotomy basic to all human beings. While I consider a resolution of this seeming inconsistency to be relevant to understanding Adam’s motivation to sin as conceived by John of Salisbury, I bear fully in

¹⁴⁷ Steiner, 710.

¹⁴⁸ KJV Bible.

mind Lewis Aron's warning about any contemporary reading.¹⁴⁹ With that in mind, let me begin by exploring the scriptural symbolism of the tree.

Mircea Eliade has eloquently presented the idea of each sacred place as an *axis mundi* (centre of the world), necessary to establish a point of reference in an otherwise secular cosmos. Eliade coined the appearance of a world centre as an "*hierophany*," as an alternative to the more restricted "*theophany*," or appearance of a god. Identifying three different planes of existence – heaven, earth and underworld – Eliade identified an *axis mundi* as the only place in which there is a break in the homogeneity of space, and a passage from one cosmic plane to another. The possibility of movement between planes is expressed by images or symbols referring to the *axis mundi*: pillar (cf. the *universalis columna*), ladder (cf. Jacob's ladder), or tree.¹⁵⁰ He has also shown specifically that the sacred tree is a near universal *axis mundi* across cultures and eras:

In addition to cosmic trees like Yggdrasil of Germanic mythology, the history of religions records trees of life (e.g., in Mesopotamia), of immortality (Asia, Old Testament), of knowledge (Old Testament), of youth (Mesopotamia, India, Iran), and so on. In other words, the tree came to express everything that religious man regards as *pre-eminently real and sacred* (Eliade's emphasis), everything that he knows the gods to possess of their own nature and that is only rarely accessible to privileged individuals, the heroes and the demigods.¹⁵¹

Since much of the primeval age Bible draws inspiration from ancient cultures, this symbolic universality accounts for the centrality of the tree in the Bible. As examples, Frese and Gray have noted the myrtle as the symbol of Mary's virginity, willows and cedars as death symbols, branches of the palm for Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and the

¹⁴⁹ "Among the greatest challenges to a contemporary reading of Eve and Adam is the impossibility of a naïve reading. It is too late to go back, you can't go home again to the nakedness of an interpretation-free textual reading. The road is blocked by the cherubim, awesome winged beasts, as well as by a whirling sword. We are prejudiced by centuries, no – by literally millennia, of previous readings and interpretations. Not only can we not interpret innocently, but we cannot agree on key terms without imposing millennia of layered traditions and interpretive understandings." Aron, 684.

¹⁵⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The sacred and the profane; the nature of religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 37.

¹⁵¹ Eliade, 149.

olive as a symbol of Christ's healing grace.¹⁵² It is not surprising, therefore, that the tree is central in the opening narratives of Genesis: "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."¹⁵³

Here the tree represents both nourishment and aesthetic pleasure, consistent with man's two natures, but, as well, the differing desires arising from that duality. That two trees are specifically noted, one offering immortality and the other knowledge, is in keeping with other religious traditions – e.g., the ancient Babylonians believed the entry to heaven to have been guarded by the tree of truth and the tree of life, while Buddhists still consider the *bodhi* tree as the source of both life and enlightenment.¹⁵⁴ But having placed the two trees in paradise, God warns Adam: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"¹⁵⁵.

Because no one's world was paradisiacal, the reader knew, or surely sensed, what was to come, but also knew that one could not simply ascribe the outcome to divine hostility. God's loving act of creation had, after all, placed Adam in Paradise, recognized his loneliness, created him a companion, and offered them immortality.

At this point clarifications would be useful but, as noted earlier by Aron, the countless interpretations, translations, and additions to the story of the Fall have made, and continue to make, clarifications difficult. When Genesis says that the prohibited tree allows knowledge of good and evil, how are we to interpret the prohibition, and the nature of the sin of disobedience? It cannot refer to knowledge of morality for this implies that Adam was created with no such moral grounding. If so, Adam therefore cannot be held responsible because he lacks the moral judgment to recognize sin. Orlinsky agrees, noting that: "(In Hebrew) the tree imparts knowledge of *tov wa-ra*. The

¹⁵² Pamela Frese and S. J. M. Gray, "Trees," *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 9334.

¹⁵³ *KJV Bible*, Genesis 2.9.

¹⁵⁴ Frese and Gray, 9334-9340.

¹⁵⁵ *KJV Bible*, Genesis 2.16-17.

traditional translation (of *tov wa-ra*) is ‘good and evil,’ but *tov wa-ra* is a fixed expression denoting ‘everything,’ rather than a moral concept.”¹⁵⁶ However, if we are to accept the broader interpretation of “everything,” this suggests that, except for animal instinct, Adam was a *tabula rasa*, and we know that this cannot be correct because Adam named every living creature as they are created.¹⁵⁷ Gordis notes: “It is a truism that in ancient thought, including the biblical world-view, knowing the name of any person or object is tantamount to comprehending its nature.”¹⁵⁸ Adam’s wisdom in the act of naming also nullifies the interpretation that God’s prohibition was simply a “parental” act, as if Adam were an ignorant child. There is one more interpretation that also seems illogical, namely that “evil” is the knowledge of human sexuality. In the *Confessions* Augustine famously made sexual concupiscence the essential human problem, and Ambrose, Jerome, and Paul were among the many church fathers who preached the desirability of celibacy.¹⁵⁹ But the “evil” of human sexuality is a later reading, and not reflective of either the Hebrew Bible or early Jewish society.¹⁶⁰ In Jewish culture the generation of children through sexual intercourse was believed to be a God-given commandment, and thus the later mind/body dualism was a Hellenistic/Christian interpretation.

However, while not the struggle between flesh and spirit, the rabbinical reading also suggests an existential dichotomy. Recall that Adam 1 is a creature entirely within nature, brought into a world already fully provided with everything needed for existence, and with a partner:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and

¹⁵⁶ *Notes on the new translation of The Torah*, (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969.) 108.

¹⁵⁷ *KJV Bible*, Genesis 2.19-20.

¹⁵⁸ “Indeed, naming an object represents the knowledge that spells power, so that in the case of God or the gods, it is equivalent to creation.” Robert Gordis, “The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, June 1957, (The Society of Biblical Literature), 125.

¹⁵⁹ E.g. Paul: “For I would that all men were even as I myself (i.e. celibate). But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” *KJV Bible*, Corinthians 7:7-9.

¹⁶⁰ See Aron, 685.

subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.¹⁶¹

For Adam 1 the world is simply an object to be manipulated and controlled for his benefit. There is no loneliness and no suggestion of self-reflection or desire, and no involvement in the act of creation. Adam 1 is complete, but seems somewhat limited in human, rational potential. In contrast Adam 2 appears in a barren world, God having withheld rain as “there was not a man to till the ground.”¹⁶² Adam 2 must wait for the creation of the garden, a garden into which God has already placed the trees of life and knowledge of good and evil, and warned Adam against the latter. From the outset it is understood that Adam 2’s world is immediately a potentially dangerous place, even though it is very much a world that he has helped create, first by naming the animals and next by giving his own body to create a woman against his loneliness.

If one accepts the idea that the P tradition offers Adam 1 and Adam 2 as reflective of an objective/subjective human nature, it seems logical that Adam 2 is intended to be the desired archetype. Not only does he exhibit more human emotions such as loneliness, but is also a partner in the Creation, and is immediately faced with human challenges – such as curiosity and desire. Unlike Adam 1, his future seems open to growth and change but, as any reader would know, growth and change often come at a cost. Aron notes that psychologist Erich Fromm’s reading of the Fall observed two aspects of the Creation story in support of this idea. First, in Genesis 1.1 God creates man “in His own image.” Since God is without limits, a creation in God’s image cannot be totally restricted. Secondly, also in Genesis 1.1, God considers all aspects of creation, including man and woman, as “good,” but not so in Genesis 1.2, leading to a supposition that Adam 2, and thus humanity, is not complete. Aron summarizes Fromm’s position thusly:

¹⁶¹ *KJV Bible*, Genesis 2: 27-30.

¹⁶² *KJV Bible*, Genesis 2:5.

[He] leaves us with the haunting notion that maybe God wanted the whole drama to run its course just as it did. He set the tree in the garden, issued a prohibition, sent the snake, and got humanity to assert itself, take a stand, and say no, thus establishing freedom and autonomy, and in leaving childhood innocence behind, accepting self-consciousness, sex, work, and death.¹⁶³

Two principal issues require additional explanation: the nature of Adam's sin in disobeying God's command to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the meaning of "good and evil."

A reading that Adam and Eve were punished simply for disobedience or resistance to God's will is, in my view, too basic. Resistance to God's will is not necessarily condemnatory. In Genesis 18, when God reveals to Abraham his intention to destroy Sodom, Abraham pleads for the righteous, challenging God directly: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"¹⁶⁴ The sin is not resistance, but rather intention. Recall that the same Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac as an offering. Abraham's intention in both acts is to keep within the nature of the Law, even if it means reminding God of His own nature. With Adam and Eve, and with Abraham, God has entered into a human community of shared commitments. Abraham's resistance to God's destruction of the people of Sodom, and his binding of Isaac, maintain the community. But Adam and Eve's disobedience is non-communal, a simple, self-indulgent desire, in this case to "become God." Given the absolute centrality of the Law within Judaism, self-centred desire to step beyond the law must carry a consequence, in this case banishment.

But if we accept Fromm's suggestion that the act of disobedience was in some way God's intention, what is the nature of the knowledge of good and evil gleaned from the tree? Martin Buber believes that knowledge of good and evil "means nothing else than: cognizance of opposites...awareness of the opposites inherent in all beings within the world."¹⁶⁵ Good and evil in this sense is totally ambiguous and the knowledge is therefore "both good and bad. Knowledge can be used for both good and evil; sexuality,

¹⁶³ Aron, 688.

¹⁶⁴ *KJV Bible*, Genesis 18:23, 25.

¹⁶⁵ Martin Buber, *On the Bible; eighteen studies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 17.

both good and evil; self-awareness, both good and bad; leaving Eden, both good and bad; even death and our awareness of death, both good and bad.”¹⁶⁶

The use of knowledge therefore begins with intention, meaning that one can choose, one can will, the right choice. And central to this reading is a belief that God wants us to make the right choice.¹⁶⁷ Unless man has tried to grow, even with wrong intention, and suffered the penalty attached, growth is not possible.

It is at this point that we can return to John of Salisbury, for an examination of Book 8, Chapter 25, of the *Policraticus* indicates that John of Salisbury strongly believes that man is capable of learning from the errors caused by a wrongly guided will. He allows that the tree, as the *axis mundi* of Genesis and the site of Crucifixion, represents the transition point for fallen man, and that Christian grace is the means that allows the transition

Our salvation is procured from grace in the wood of the cross because in the past death has proceeded from the tree...I acknowledge that grace is operative in both the will and the accomplishments of the elect; I revere it as the way – indeed, the only true way – which leads to life and renders satisfaction to each one’s good wishes.¹⁶⁸

Unlike some interpretations that focus specifically on the evil that enters the world through the sin of disobedience, he chose an interpretation that recognized that the tree allowed knowledge of both good **and** evil; i.e., that man could not recognize the good, and thus gain full capacity for moral acts, until after tasting the fruit of the tree:

Let him who has already tasted illicit fruits abstain from unlawful things, and let him pacify burning desire by well-disposed charity. He is to

¹⁶⁶ Aron, 705.

¹⁶⁷ “Freedom, reason and sexuality were the source of the errors that brought evil into Creation. Properly managed, just those capacities can be molded to form human beings far more noble than anything possible in the state of nature. Equally important is the idea that redemption would take place through the very processes that led us to ruin. For a God who allowed our natural faculties to lead us to a catastrophe that only a miracle can get us out of isn’t as good as one who gave us the means to repair our own damage.” Susan Neiman, *Evil in modern thought: an alternative history of philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 50-51.

¹⁶⁸ *Policraticus*, 227-228.

delight in these things; he may see even now that the tree is beautiful in appearance and sweet to eat, and that it will give in its own time the fruit of true happiness and the condition of an ever joyful life of tranquility.¹⁶⁹

Once man understands the “cognizance of opposites” the fearsome barriers to the tree are removed and man returns “home”:

It is promised to them that “the revolving and flaming sword” will be removed from the tree of knowledge so that they may be led and enter into their native country.¹⁷⁰

If sin exists in approaching the tree of knowledge it is therefore a matter of intention. John would have encountered this idea early in his education from Peter Abelard, either through direct, albeit brief, instruction, or through Abelard’s writings. Using his famous (or infamous) *Sic et Non* model, Abelard once posed the question: did the Jews sin in crucifying Christ? Sikes summarizes:

Now in his definition of sin Abailard (sic) clearly infers that the nature of God’s will must first be known before it can be spurned...Evil deeds which men commit in ignorance cannot, according to his view, be counted as conferring guilt; guilt can only come from the commission of an act that men know to be sinful...Abailard states that, as their intentions were sound and since they believed they were doing the work of God, neither those who crucified Christ nor those who persecuted the early Christians can be reckoned as sinful, and to support his contention he quotes the prayer of Christ upon the Cross for the forgiveness of those who crucified him “not knowing what they did.”¹⁷¹

A good student of Abelard would certainly understand that Adam and Eve sinned through intention to disobey and suffered just punishment, but would also argue that to come to the tree without sinful intention, or better, to come with rightly-guided intention to learn and understand, is mankind’s nature, a nature that reflects the mark of the divine.

If one asks if John’s desire to “return to the tree” is simply a nostalgic, philosophical return to a lost “golden age,” the answer seems to be a clear “no.” First,

¹⁶⁹ *Policraticus*, 228.

¹⁷⁰ *Policraticus*, 228.

¹⁷¹ Jeffrey Sikes, *Peter Abailard* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 187.

John was by nature a teacher, and the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus* are, above all, instructional. Second, the two works in full-text version run to over 300,000 words, and it seems unlikely that John would have summarized works that give lengthy and detailed, one might say minute, instructions on education and political leadership, with a brief and seemingly vague bit of nostalgia. His return to the Tree was his best advice to his generation about how to unite the pursuits of knowledge and virtue in a directed and fulfilling Christian life.

His own life and voice, moreover, were not unimportant ones. At Canterbury in 1159, the year in which the two works were completed, John's role had grown to include not only a wide range of diplomatic missions, but also dealing with the increasing needs, both administrative and personal, of the ailing archbishop Theobald.¹⁷² John was, in many respects, acting as the official, and perhaps most highly-placed, voice of Canterbury and the entire English church. He was still a relatively young man, with almost twenty years of further service yet to come. John's exile, Becket's succession to the archbishopric and his assassination, John's appointment as bishop of Chartres – all of these lay in the future. Perhaps at no other time in his life would he feel as well-placed to be influential. While nostalgia might have been appropriate much later in his life, it doesn't seem so in 1159. The works contain a certain air of self-consolation reminiscent of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, but the *Metalogicon* and the *Policraticus* must be seen in my view as "policy documents," intended for the political guidance and direction of Becket as a member of the Canterbury community. That the two works are highly detailed and set in a very comprehensive intellectual context reflects on John's own erudition and pedagogical philosophy.

Rather than nostalgia, his "return to the tree" is a reminder of the importance of intention as key to moral behaviour, as well as a reminder of the scriptural basis for such guidance. That his conclusion is less pointed and less directly critical than, for example, either his or William's criticisms of the Cornificians, reflects his Aristotelian desire to find

¹⁷² "By later in 1159, John had been left to cope with disputes internal to the English Church as well as the business stemming from Canterbury's relations with the king and papacy. Clearly, Theobald placed a great deal of trust in his secretary, as evidenced by his choice of John to draft his will as well and to serve...as one of the executors." Nederman, *John of Salisbury*. 23.

the mean. He would have considered the background provided in thousands of words to be sufficient evidence of the urgency he felt necessary to deal with the growing careerism and venality that he observed in both church and state bureaucracies. And remembering that the subtitle of the *Policraticus* is *The Frivolities of the Courtiers*, there is little doubt of his audience: "He who had rushed towards his death through disobedience stemming from the frivolity of the will struggles forcefully with grace to obtain life, as though obedience had strengthened him."¹⁷³ No doubt he hoped, in the humanistic spirit of the time, that the two works would foster a revival of classical education and, moreover, a new sense of the necessity of the "forceful struggle" against mundane, self-serving courtiership.

¹⁷³ *Policraticus*, 228.

6. Conclusion

But John was too late. His desire for a “return to the tree” can be understood by biblical exegesis, but his failure to be the societal change agent that he wished to be might be explained by twelfth-century economics. Made possible by new economic reality, social ambition for better lives in the here and now had largely surpassed the desire for the anagogic path through education to salvation. While a comprehensive review of the twelfth-century economy is beyond the bounds of this thesis, it helps to explain the new bureaucracies (about which John had such serious misgivings) by being reminded that the eleventh century had seen, for the first time since the fall of Rome, systems of central government strong enough to produce and support generally accepted coinage. This had not happened during the reign of Charlemagne because of “psychological inertia,”¹⁷⁴ lack of bullion, and shortage of time, but these were no longer issues in the eleventh century and beyond:

By 1100 money was established in the nerve-centres (of Europe), and had begun the long process by which it penetrated every part of the economy...This period would prove to have been a turning point, in which the economic language of the central Middle Ages was first formulated.¹⁷⁵

As it had in the Roman Empire, the availability of money, made possible by strong central authority, allowed social movement upward.¹⁷⁶ With Rome’s fall and the collapse of such authority, the empire was replaced by hundreds of small landholdings

¹⁷⁴ More than once the Carolingian rulers had to enact laws prescribing fines, or even floggings, of persons refusing payment in government coinage. See Murray, 38-39.

¹⁷⁵ Murray, 57.

¹⁷⁶ For an exhaustive survey of wealth and social mobility in the Roman Empire, see Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), especially chapter 1 (“*Aurea aetas* - Wealth in an Age of Gold”), chapter 3 (“*Amor civicus* - Love of the city - Wealth and Its Uses in an Ancient World”) and chapter 12 (“*Ista vero saecularia* - Those things, indeed, of the world - Ausonius, Villas, and the Language of Wealth”).

under local lords. With no central authority to create and support coinage, the economy returned to barter, and the rigidity of the three estates of the early Middle Ages (those who work, those who pray, and those who fight), coupled with the fervent desire of the landholding nobles to restrict any movement of their farm labour, meant that social mobility was essentially non-existent. But the return of central authority in the eleventh and twelfth centuries gave rise to a moneyed class of merchants and administrators that was necessary to the new church and state bureaucracies, and created a “fourth estate,” one that was not limited to noble names or clerical privilege, and thereby was generally accessible.¹⁷⁷ Payment in money allowed tradesmen to specialize, and to travel in order to sell their services. It also allowed the landless to simply purchase land, instead of trying to earn a benefice through service to a local lord. The payment of tithes and taxes allowed central authorities, both church and state, to consider very ambitious, large-scale projects. Murray notes: “The more we reflect, in fact, the more we realize that money, rather than being a solvent of medieval society as it might first appear, was a prerequisite for its most characteristic achievements – such as cathedrals, pilgrimages, and crusades.”¹⁷⁸ John of Salisbury was caught in this transition and he often reflected both the distaste for the new money economy,¹⁷⁹ and his own involvement in it.¹⁸⁰

In the *Policraticus*, John presented the idea of a moral common good that must be supported by all members of the community. I contend that John’s idea of a moral common good had become debatable in his time and even before, although the question at hand is quite modern: what is morally necessary in the economy of any given society? Among medieval moralists, John was certainly not alone in condemning financial avarice, especially in the church, e.g., “For the house of prayer is made, God forbidding, into a house of business affairs; and the temple founded upon the rock of assistance is

¹⁷⁷ “The same yearning for power and prestige affects high and low.” *Policraticus*, Book VII, c. 19. (quoted in Murray, 81)

¹⁷⁸ Murray, 39.

¹⁷⁹ “In the present world, whoever does not have riches is stupid, asinine, a dummy, a blockhead, leaden, or, if nothing else, he is insensate. If anyone is a pauper, he is, therefore, stupid and unhappy.” *Policraticus*, 99.

¹⁸⁰ “Hope of help from the Lord is with us still, all hope of human succour being gone. For myself, I am crushed beneath a load of debts and the importunity of my creditors.” *Letters*, Letter 124 to Ralph of Sarr, June-July, 1160.

transformed into a den of robbers.”¹⁸¹ And the Bible famously notes that “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”¹⁸². However, even early fathers of the church had a certain ambivalence toward wealth,¹⁸³ and I believe that the primary social change that John failed to recognize was the revival of the market economy referred to by Chenu (see pages 3-4), and the extent of the resulting economic changes in twelfth-century society, i.e., money, market relations and technological development, burgeoning trade activity, and the growth of the middle class. One might say that, by the twelfth century, avarice was still a sin, but ambition not so much, and the morality of market transactions, considered sinful since the time of the early church,¹⁸⁴ was being reconsidered.

Property law provides a useful example. Recall that, along with much else, the breakup of the Roman Empire removed legal jurisdiction over ownership, and the extensive work done by jurists such as Gratian of Bologna was done to reconstruct and

¹⁸¹ *Policraticus*, 164.

¹⁸² *KJV Bible*, 1 Timothy 6:10.

¹⁸³ Peter Brown notes that, while bishop of Hippo, Augustine often preached against the expenditure of the African wealthy for the local gladiatorial games and food distribution to citizens, in favour of Christian giving that did not privilege citizenship. However, he was silent on the immeasurably larger expenditure of imperial Rome on the *annona* system that provided the emperor’s distribution of grain and oil to citizens of Rome, as a great majority of that grain and oil was purchased in Africa, and delivered to Rome from ships leaving Hippo and Carthage. See Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 72-74.

¹⁸⁴ “*Homo mercator vix aut numquam potest Deo placere* (“A man who is a merchant can seldom please God.”) Attributed to St. Jerome (c. 347 – 420 CE), and here used as title by André Vauchez, “*Homo mercator vix aut numquam potest Deo placere* : quelques réflexions sur l’attitude des milieux ecclésiastiques face aux nouvelles formes de l’activité économique au XII^e et au début du XIII^e siècle,” *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public*, 1988.

codify Roman law, including statutes concerning property rights, in a medieval setting.¹⁸⁵ Ownership of property became a principal issue for legal challenge, as did the rights of such property holders, and by the thirteenth century two basic precepts of Roman property law had been re-established in medieval courts. These were: “*Res tantum valet quantum vendi potest*” (“A thing is worth the amount for which it can be sold”), and “*Quisque suae rei est moderator et arbiter*” (“Everyone is the moderator and arbiter of his own goods.”) As Nederman notes: “When these two principles are fully embraced, the notion that moral precepts are relevant to the judgment of free market interactions is profoundly diminished, if not erased.”¹⁸⁶

At the time of the publishing of the *Policraticus* and the *Metalogicon* (1159) the more dramatic events in John’s service to Canterbury were in the future – the death of Archbishop Theobald (1161), the naming of Thomas Becket as Theobald’s replacement (1162), Becket’s (and John’s) flight into a six-year exile (1164-1170), and John’s presence at Becket’s assassination (1170). He attempted one more major work, the *Historia Pontificalis* (c. 1163), a retrospective of five years of diplomatic service within the papal court, 1148 – 1153, but it seems incomplete, perhaps simply abandoned.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ “Gratian (died c. 1155) is known as the father of canon law. His book on the laws of the Catholic Church revolutionized the study of canon law and was the single greatest authority on the subject until the 20th century. Gratian was a monk in the Camaldolese congregation of the Order of St. Benedict. Hardly anything is known about his life. He was one of those historical figures whose works completely hide their persons. He was a lecturer at the monastery of Saints Felix and Nabor in Bologna in Italy at the time when that city was beginning to be widely known as a center for the study of law. The Catholic Church then had no uniform law. Over the centuries popes had made legal decisions, councils had issued decrees, and Church officials throughout Europe had used their authority in various ways. Doctrine and theology were also considered as guides for conduct. For a century before Gratian, scholars had attempted to collect all this material and put it in some kind of order, but no one had been really successful. Sometime in the 1140s, after years of study, Gratian completed a work in this field that was outstanding. It was easily the best handling of this difficult subject that the world had seen, and it quickly became the most important textbook on Church law for all of Europe.” “Gratian” *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd ed. Vol. 6 (Detroit: Gale, 2004), 498-499. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web, 17 Feb. 2013. 498.

¹⁸⁶ For a full discussion of the twelfth-century “commercial revolution” and the changing attitude toward economic activities, see “The Origins of Policy in Twelfth-Century England,” and “Economic Liberty and the Politics of Wealth,” in Nederman’s *Lineages of European Political Thought: explorations along the medieval/modern divide from John of Salisbury to Hegel* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 201– 258, here 225.

¹⁸⁷ See Christopher Brooke, “Aspects of John of Salisbury’s *Historia Pontificalis*,” *Intellectual life in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), 185-195.

He also completed *Vita et Passio Sancti Thome*, a hagiography of Becket, but this too seems to fall well short of his capability.¹⁸⁸

More satisfactory are his many letters, those written in diplomatic service, and especially those personal, private letters to friends and colleagues in the period 1163-1170. They expressed John's growing unease with the personalities of both Becket and Henry, as well as the growing stress on John's diplomatic (and Aristotelian) nature as he was increasingly unable to find the moderate middle ground. He was a servant of Canterbury and Becket, who, as archbishop, therefore commanded his loyalty.

But while Becket acted on behalf of Canterbury, he also had the leader's obligation, as John explains in the *Policraticus*, to work in partnership with the king for the common good. This required a balanced nature, and John grew to realize that willingness to compromise was not in Becket's nature, just as it was not in Henry's.¹⁸⁹ The growing quarrel between Becket and Henry eventually forced John to what might be a diplomat's worst fear: the requirement to choose sides. Returning to England in 1166, John arranged a face-to-face meeting with the king, hoping to negotiate Becket's return

¹⁸⁸ "This rather perfunctory treatment of Becket's career and character suggests its composition was rather hasty...the most compelling part of the *Vita* is the account of Thomas's death, but this is derived directly from John's letter to John of Canterbury describing the events (and recall that he had fled the scene, so large segments of the report were second-hand)...Why John failed to bring his substantial literary talents to bear on a story so dramatic and with which he was closely associated remains a mystery that could only be solved if much more were to be known about his circumstances in the early 1170s." Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 81.

¹⁸⁹ "The question of John's loyalty to Becket during the period of exile is a vexed one. His letters reveal an attitude of displeasure with all the main parties to the dispute: King Henry II, the English ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Canterbury curia, and Archbishop Thomas himself...(but) John seems to regard Henry and Becket to be engaged in a largely personal quarrel between two offices (king and archbishop) that need not – indeed, ought not – embroil the whole of the English church. Henry's attacks on Thomas constituted for John a personal 'tribulation' for the archbishop and 'test' of his resolve." Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 30.

from exile. But Henry's only response was to demand that John swear an oath renouncing obedience to Becket, a demand that John refused.¹⁹⁰

Throughout the period of continued exile (1164-1170), John's letters focused on aiding a rapprochement allowing Becket and the other exiles, including himself, to return to England. The accord was reached in July 1170, and the return took place in November 1170. But less than two months later Becket was assassinated in Canterbury Cathedral, and Henry II had, for all intents and purposes, established secular hegemony over the English church.

John's final years seem to suggest a certain resignation as to the new state of church vs. state affairs, although he continued to devote energy to extolling Becket and to promoting the cause of Canterbury as the true head of the English church. He was made treasurer of Exeter in 1173 and bishop of Chartres in 1176, but his written output was minimal during this last decade. In assessing his impact, I consider Luscombe's summary somewhat harsh, but not inaccurate:

Along with other clerical moralists, John wholly failed to appreciate the pragmatism of the king; he saw contemporary politics in a muddled way through Patristic and Biblical spectacles. Such shortsightedness was inevitable since John of Salisbury did not believe the world was a real one; it was merely a stage on which men played. Reality for John lay elsewhere, and true understanding only comes through the study of philosophy.¹⁹¹

John's concerns about the careerist mentality of the schools certainly reflected a new focus on ambition, but he overlooked a societal change that ambition and the pursuit of wealth, wealth essential for the operations of church and state institutions,

¹⁹⁰ "John knew both men personally, and must have realized that they each possessed stubborn, temperamental, and single-minded characters. From a distance, their quarrel may have looked like a clash of personalities that could be settled through a greater degree of mutual understanding and compromise. As the truth about their incommensurable visions of the relationship between the spiritual and the secular spheres began to sink in, John found himself forced to make a choice. And his decision, flowing from his own conception of personal life no less than from his professional experience, drove him to accept without qualification the side of Becket." Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 31.

¹⁹¹ Luscombe, "John of Salisbury in Recent Scholarship," *The world of John of Salisbury*. (Oxford: Published for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1984) 31.

and wealth allowing social mobility of individuals after centuries of rigid tripartite social hierarchy, was no longer *de facto* sinful. And here one must note that John himself is an example of both ambition and the rethinking of social hierarchy. It was ambition to better himself through the best education possible that took the young John from England to Paris, and he was also one of the key thinkers in re-shaping the tripartite social model, creating an organic model of the body as society with, rather than three parts, “as many parts of the body as...required to correspond to members of the state.”¹⁹² The social gap between a peasant and a lord was so great as to be impossible to cross. But if the peasant simply aspired to be a tradesman, the tradesman a merchant, or the merchant a banker, and the social model allowed for all, the gaps between them were far less onerous and far more manageable. And in the twelfth century money allowed one to jump those gaps.

However, John’s concerns about educational pedagogy are still quite relevant. A current student in any discipline will spend inordinate hours trying to clarify the exact meaning of, for instance, terms of a legal contract. Jurisprudence often turns on a single word or phrase. Understanding what is meant, how it is being said, how it can be interpreted, and how it might be subverted, are all critical skills, regardless of discipline or situation. These are the skills that John of Salisbury learned, and promoted, through the *trivium* and subsequent studies. John would likely be disheartened that the argument over the value of the liberal arts is still unsettled, but also pleased that, for the moment, the argument continues.

¹⁹² For a thorough discussion of the changes in the tripartite social model by the twelfth century, see Paul Edward Dutton, “*Illustre Civitatis et Populi Exemplum*: Plato’s *Timaeus* and the transmission from Calcidius to the end of the twelfth century of a tripartite scheme of society,” 79-119, here 111.

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