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Mediated Recognition and the Quest for a Common Rational Field of Discussion in Three Early Medieval Dialogues

Abstract: Using interpretative resources from contemporary recognition theory with a special focus on the notion of mediated recognition, this paper discusses the nature and degree of methodological agreement as manifested in three twelfth-century dialogues. The first source to be considered was written by Gilbert of Crispin, and known as *Disputatio Christiani cum Gentili* (Disputation of Christian with a Pagan), ca. 1093. The second source was composed by the Christian convert Peter Alfonsi, whose dialogue *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* (Dialogue against the Jews) was written about 1110. The third source to be considered is Peter Abelard's treatise *Collationes*, a dialogue with three participants and the narrator, written between 1127 and 1132. In particular, the paper discusses the role of reason, the principles of argument, and the potentially-shared set of rules these dialogues employ, thereby bringing the agreement among conflicting parties into focus. In this respect, the novel interpretative approach based on recognition theory also differs markedly from the standard reading of apologetic texts, which usually emphasizes conflict and disagreement.

Keywords: medieval philosophy, recognition theory, methodological agreement, disputation literature, reason

Introduction

In this paper, we will discuss the nature and degree of methodological agreement as manifested in three twelfth-century dialogues. In particular, we will consider the role of reason, the principles of argument, and the potentially shared sets of rules these dialogues employ, thereby bringing the *agreement among conflicting parties* into focus.[1] In this respect, our approach differs markedly from standard readings of

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1 Thus far the eleventh and twelfth century disputation literature has been studied to some extent, but the interest has been focused on the description of general argumentation, on the definition of reason, or on the dynamics of conflict. See, for example, Abulafia, *Christians and Jews*. Our study does not claim to be an exhaustive examination concerning the range of reasoning in early medieval dialogues, but attempts to offer three different case studies of the subject. These dialogues represent a more positive account of 'others' than most of the dialogues of this genre. Although the amicable tone and the quest for 'fairness' in the argumentation of the dialogues is shared by all, the treatises still represent a literal genre that sought to demonstrate the Christian truths. The author mainly wishes to strengthen definite Christian identity and thinking as opposed to other beliefs which are devalued in varying respects. The role of the Christian figure is usually to manifest the truth whereas the task of the other characters is to consent. For the dynamics of interaction in the apologetical dialogues, see Müllerburg/ Müller-Schauenburg/Wels, "Und Warum".

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apologetic texts, which usually emphasize conflict and disagreement between the relevant parties.[2]

Another central novelty of our paper is the utilization of *contemporary recognition theory*[3] as an interpretative method for reading Medieval dialogical texts. There are three important conceptual resources from recognition theory that we shall especially rely on. The first one has to do with the notion of *identity*. The idea of interactive social construction of both personal and cultural identities as well as the themes of identity politics are central to recognition theory. In the dialogues that we are presently focusing on, the authors operate in different combinations with the identities of a Christian, a Pagan, a Jew, a Muslim, and a Philosopher. This in itself already makes the chosen historical dialogues highly interesting from a recognition-theoretical perspective. The second interpretative resource coming from the theory is connected with two fundamental dimensions of recognition, namely *respect* and *esteem*.[4] Respect towards other persons manifests in taking the other as a rational being who is, in principle, an equal participant in a meaningful dialogue. Respect in this sense can also be seen as a precondition for entering into a genuine dialogue with the other in the first place. Esteem, on the other hand, can be seen as something granted on the basis of specific argumentative capabilities and rational merits of particular participants in the dialogues. The third and final recognition-theoretical interpretative resource is then based on the idea of a mediated form of recognition. *Mediated recognition* is instantiated in a context in which some third party performs a mediating role between two distinct parties that, for some reason or another, do not initially recognize each other in some desired or appropriate way.[5] What especially interests us here is the mediating role played by the common standards of rationality adopted by the distinct parties in the dialogues. In the following, this quest for a common rational field of discussion also systematically connects our themes of recognition and agreement with each other.

The first source we will consider is written by Gilbert of Crispin, the abbot of Westminster, and known as *Disputatio Christiani cum Gentili* (Disputation of Christian with a Pagan), ca. 1093.[6] The second source was composed by the Christian convert Peter Alfonsi, whose dialogue *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* was written about 1110. This dialogue is between Peter, the writer's new Christian self, and Moses, his former Jewish self.[7] The third source to be considered is Peter Abelard's treatise *Collationes*, a dialogue with three participants and the narrator, written between 1127 and 1132. In its first part, the discussion is held between the representative of Jews and a Philosopher, whereas the second part presents a dialogue between a Christian and a Philosopher. Unlike Alfonsi's *Dialogi*, *Collationes* was preserved in only a few medieval manuscripts and its influence was slight.[8]

These three sources are semi-fictional, as they are only partly based on real events and conversational encounters. The literary genre of these dialogues has its roots in early Christianity's struggle for self-assertion in the religious confrontations called the Jewish-Christian debate or literature *adversus Iudaeos*.

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3 Contemporary recognition theory is based on the foundational work of Taylor, "Politics", and Honneth, *Struggle*. The framework has been further explicated and developed e.g., by Ikäheimo & Laitinen, "Recognition". See also Thompson, *Political Theory*; McBride, *Recognition*; and Zurn, *Honneth*.

4 Cf. e.g., Honneth, *Struggle*, 92–139; Ikäheimo, "Genus and Species".

5 On the notion of mediated recognition, see e.g., Koskinen, "Categorial Stance"; "Mediated Recognition"; Koskinen & Palmén, "Agreement".

6 For a short introduction to Gilbert's works, see Abulafia and Evans, *Works*, xxv–xli.

7 Reinhardt and Santiago-Otero, "Pedro Alfonso", 19–44; Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi*, xiii–xiv.

8 For the timing and influence of *Collationes*, see Marenbon, "Introduction", xxxii, lxxxvii–xci.

In the twelfth-century discussions, this genre was further broadened to disputations between Christians and philosophers, pagans, and competing Christian heresies.[9]

We will argue that – in addition to certain pragmatic and rhetorical commonalities – the three dialogues to be discussed share many significant features, particularly the quest for the best possible argument on the basis of differing combinations of reason and appeal to authority for the defence of the Christian faith. In addition, they all pre-suppose that the contending parties can nevertheless agree upon a set of common rules or a shared form of rationality. However, while reason is often said to be the major principle, its application varies from text to text.[10] First, the actors in the dialogue resort to *rational arguments per se*, such as universal necessity or self-evident truths, shared by all rational creatures. Second, the arguments utilize *natural philosophy* and the scientific findings of the time, treated on par with the more formal elements of the shared realm of rationality as well. The third plane of the shared rationality is *moral philosophy* and the search for the principle of the good life. By showing how the shared features are employed in the texts to be discussed, we will identify three different argumentative strategies based on reason and rationality. All three can be interpreted as functioning as mediating elements that help to build common fields of discussion and advance mutual relations of recognition.

Gilbert Crispin: Rational Demonstration of Truths

Gilbert Crispin was a nobleman from one of the best Norman families. He succeeded in his studies, and became a respectful pupil as well as a close friend of Anselm of Bec. Lanfranc invited Gilbert to assist him in Canterbury and, soon after his arrival, appointed Gilbert abbot of Westminster.[11] Gilbert wrote several treatises, but his best-known and most widely-disseminated work is *Disputatio Iudei*, in which argumentation is founded on both the testimony of reason and the Scriptures. This work brings together a great variety of standard Jewish-Christian disputational material and presents it in well-structured form.[12] Perhaps Gilbert found some related questions in need of additional analysis, since he wrote another disputation, reporting a conversation between a Christian and a Pagan, *Disputatio Christiani cum Gentili*.[13] In this clearly fictive dialogue, Gilbert rejects arguments based on Scripture and attempts to employ rational argument alone.

Obviously Gilbert is not that confident in rational reasoning, but still wishes to try his ability in such a discussion as well, perhaps being encouraged by his teacher, Anselm of Canterbury, who opens his *Monologion* by alleging that if a person is even moderately intelligent, he can convince himself of most

9 The importance of this polemical literary genre to later Christian writers is substantial. One of the most famous early disputations is Justin Martyr's dialogue with Trypho (ca.160), an amicable conversation about the Jewish people and Jesus' identification as Messiah. See Novikoff, *Medieval Disputation*, 16–19.

10 The foundation of the twelfth-century dialectics and argument strategies is the Aristotelian tradition. Following Aristotle's *Topics*, Boethius writes in his *De Topicis Differentiis* 1, 5, p. 15; (PL 64, 1180A) that questions for disputation can be drawn from three sources; (1) logic (reason of discourse, *ratio disserendi*), (2) natural theory, and (3) moral theory. Boethius also states that argument is a reason which produces belief in something which is regarded as in doubt. The arguments themselves may be either probable (readily believable) or necessary or both; ibid. 1, 7, p.15 (PL 64, 1180C). Boethius was long the major direct source of dialectic. For this, see Stump, *De topicis*, 24. For a general outline of dialectic and its place in medieval scholasticism, see Stump 1989. The sources of this study reflect these traditional approaches in that Alfonsi is interested in questions related to natural philosophy, whereas Abelard deals with moral issues. Gilbert Crispin's idea of rational reasoning falls into the reason for discourse, although he is not interested in logical reasoning *per se*.

11 For a short biography of Gilbert, see Abulafia and Evans, *Works*, xxi–xv. For an analysis of his dialogues and the art of disputation, see Abulafia, "Ars Disputandi", 139–152. For a recent interesting analysis of *Disputatio Christiani cum Gentili*, see Westermann, "Unius Dei cultus".

12 These two paradigms of disputation, reason and the common authority, had already been clearly argued by Peter Damian in his dialogues. *Antilogus Contra Iudaeos* (PL 145, 41–57) and *Dialogus inter Judaeum Requirentem, et Christianum e contrario respondentem* (PL 145, 57–68). Abulafia, "Ars Disputandi", 140.

13 Gilbert's dialogue reflects important resemblances to Anselm. For instance, the Jew exploits the Anselmian formulation of God as a being that nothing greater can be thought of. However, Gilbert's text also shows divergences from Anselm's new ideas in his *Cur Deus homo*. Southern has suggested that Anselm was working together with Gilbert, helping him to formulate these passages on the necessity of incarnation. For this, see Southern, "Anselm and Crispin", 87–94 and Abulafia, "Ars Disputandi", 146–147.

Christian doctrines by reason alone.[14] Gilbert's general method of argumentation *sola ratione* clearly attempts to imitate Anselm's famous scheme demonstrated in his *Monologion* and *Proslogion*.[15] However, uneasiness in rational reasoning is seen in the general setting of the dialogue, which is intentionally blurred. Gilbert is said to be abruptly drawn to hear a secret meeting of philosophers in the shady streets of London.[16] Gilbert is reluctant to join the meeting at first, but he does eventually arrive at an inn, lingering near the door.[17] He takes a passive role as a mere bystander and listener to the discussion.[18]

Gilbert says that there were many literary people at the philosophers' gathering, including students of logic, discussing how one should understand what Aristotle and Porphyry had said about the impossibility of existing primary substances which are from something else and questioning whether grammar is logic, concluding that it is neither a natural art, logic, nor a liberal art.[19] Gilbert may have composed these topics to create a plausible literary background for his disputation and to show that he has some expertise in rational argument and logic. However, in the following argument, Gilbert unexpectedly fails to use much logical inference or dialectic in his reasoning. It is uncertain whether Gilbert's abilities in the dialectics are in fact minor; however, his general idea of rational reasoning turns out to cover the use of reason in a very broad sense.

At the gathering, Gilbert also saw two famous philosophers of different sects disputing. The first one is characterized as a Pagan, a cunning opponent of the Christian faith through rational argument, whereas his challenger, a Christian, is a defender of the right faith with true assertions.[20] The disputation begins when the Pagan claims that Christians unfairly call them irrational.[21] He argues that pagan poets, exercising the science of eloquence, said many things without believing them, actually teaching various things. Without giving any justification for this method of the poets, the Pagan continues that there is a difference between common people and the more reasonable ones, the common people being like animals who know nothing above sensible things. The people devoted to reason and truth, however, can separate senses from imagination and imagination from reason and believe that the intelligence of God the creator is above all.[22] This anthropological scheme of human capacities derives from Boethius and is used by the Pagan to emphasize that both pagans and Christians have mutual rational abilities to use in a common rational field of discussion.

The common parameters for the debate are mutually negotiated in a dialogic process. Since the Pagan maintains that the defining principle of the human being is his reason, he declares that he will not take into account any arguments based on the Christian laws. The Christian agrees with the Pagan, exhorting them both to omit the authorities and to follow rational judgement alone.[23] This means that they both agree that the sole parameter for the discussion should be reason.

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14 For identifying this friend as Anselm, see Abulafia, "Disputing", 137. For Anselm's note, *Monologion* 1.13. Anselm's pupil Boso is presented as an infidel searching for rational demonstration in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. For a recent analysis of Boso's character and questioning for rational reasons for the main Christian doctrines, see Göbel, "Reasons", 207–210.

15 Gilbert was not as confident in reason's powers as Anselm was, often relying on authorities and accepting that reason had its limits in religious matters. See Abulafia, "Disputing", 139–141.

16 *Disputatio cum gentili* 1, 61.

17 Ibid., p. 61–62.

18 For a similar method in Abelard's *Collationes*, see Hösle, *God as Reason*, 227.

19 *Disputatio cum gentili* 2–3, 62. Gilbert refers to Aristotle's distinction between the primary and secondary substances in his *Categories* 2b5. Gilbert's discussion about the position of grammar among the liberal arts interestingly reflects the early medieval debate about the division of philosophy.

20 *Disputatio cum gentili* 4, 62.

21 It is unlikely that the Christian would claim that the pagan was irrational, this accusation being usually directed against Jews. As noted by Abulafia, Gilbert has construed his pagan interlocutor by employing several elements. The first thin layer of this character is simply a pagan from antiquity, following Roman laws. However, the character of the pagan mainly resembles the rationalizing Jew, questioning Christian interpretations of Mosaic Law and the Trinity. Sometimes the pagan acts as a Christian disputing disbelief, putting rational arguments about God's existence. Abulafia, "Disputing", 138.

22 *Disputatio cum gentili* 5, 62–63. Cf. Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* V, p.5. Boethian distinction of the faculties of the soul has important reception history in the twelfth century. For this, see, e.g., Palmén *Imagination*, 30–49; Hamesse "Imaginatio" and Chenu "Imaginatio".

23 *Disputatio cum gentili* 6–7, 63; 9, 64.

Characteristically for twelfth century texts, reason itself is loosely defined. Gilbert writes that reason is the power of the soul which is able to discern between the just and unjust.[24] On the basis of the following argument, it is surprising that Gilbert defines reason as being related with moral discretion exclusively. However, Gilbert is here alluding to Anselm's characterisation of reason, which includes the standard idea that reason is also able to distinguish the true from the not-true, the good from the not-good and the greater good from the lesser one.[25] These broad ideas of reason do not come to the fore in the text. Instead, the main point is to demonstrate through rational arguments that the Christian faith has an internal consistency and intelligible structure. This more general aim can be best achieved by a dialogic process, in which the Pagan tests the limits of rationality and explicitly challenges the inner coherence of Christian beliefs.

The first set of the Christian's rational arguments is a tight construction with many allusions to Anselm's works. The Christian holds that one may believe that only one God exists, not many, by following the path of reason. It is not possible to attribute plurality to God, since this would mean that it is possible to attribute infinite multitude to him. Second, there is nothing greater or better than God, who is above everything, and man should love and fear him. On that basis, one should obey God's will and mandates.[26]

The Pagan has many objections to the Christian's arguments. His dispute is not directed against the rational conclusions drawn by the Christian, since it actually seems that he agrees with the aforementioned points. Instead, he contests the inner rationality of Christian beliefs, claiming that Christians accept many contradictory ideas, including, for example, God's immutability and changes in his will. For instance, why would a good God create the human being and then let him be ruined? This inability of Christians to maintain one coherent opinion about God leads the pagans to withdraw from the Christian faith and the cult of their God.[27] In this discussion, the Pagan does not attempt to evaluate the bases of Christian views, but ultimately accuses Christians of being irrational in their system of beliefs, seeing it as incoherent. The unstated assumption is that if the Pagan is able to demonstrate the incoherence, his arguments succeed.

The Christian takes another route, and tries to show that they have some common parameters for the discussion, claiming that they both share the same fundamental beliefs, which are rationally justifiable. First, the God of the Pagan and his God are not two gods, but one. Christians believe and trust in one God, and build everything on truthful assertions. Pagans also sense it, because their reason shows that there can be but one God. Next, the Christian proposes that the Pagan should submit himself to faith, because by doing this, he will understand the issues of faith. Apparently as an analogy suitable for pagans, he relates that before beginners have a better knowledge of liberal arts, they leave things to authorities without permission to contest them immediately. Now the Pagan should do the same with Christian authorities.[28] Although the Pagan does not directly reject the Christian's proposition, in the following argument he disregards it.

Second, the Christian asserts that there is nothing better than God, and they both agree on this. They both also hold that God has created only good things. The Christian argues that it is better to create the human being who is able to both sin and not to sin, that is, endow him with free will.[29] Similarly, it is better to be able to both use reason and not to do so, than only to be able to use reason or not to be able to use reason. The human being knew that he willingly chose the worse and deserved to be punished. It is justice to punish injustice. The Christian admits that it is no wonder that the Pagan considers it absurd that this is said of the immutable God, since it may seem that God has altered his sanctions and decisions. Similarly, God appears to be angry with us when he punishes us for our sins, peaceful when he shows his mercy, but eventually he is like a wise doctor choosing the best cure for people.[30]

The Pagan acknowledges some truth in the Christian's arguments, admitting that the explanation about God acting as a doctor accords with the sane intellect (*sano intellectu*), there being nothing contrary to

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24 *Disputatio cum gentili* 6, 63: 'Ratio est ea vis animi que iustum ab inusto discernit.'

25 *Monologion*, chapter 68.

26 *Disputatio cum gentili* 9–10, 64. For the allusions, see notes 1 and 2, 64.

27 *Diputatio cum gentili* 11–15, 64–65.

28 *Disputatio cum gentili* 15, 65–66.

29 This idea was formulated already by Augustine, e.g., in his *De genesi ad litteram* XI, cap. 4, p. 337 and cap. 6, p. 339 and was later repeated, among others, in Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* II, xxiii, cap. 1–2, p. 447–448.

30 *Disputatio cum gentili* 16–22, 66–68.

reason. However, it seems to be completely absurd that God, who gave the law to Moses, gave and established the new law in Christ. For example, the Pagan particularly claims that fundamental Christian doctrines of the incarnation as well as the Trinity and divine simplicity are incongruous. The Pagan's language is rhetorically strong, contesting Christian beliefs as insane, mad or absurd. Moreover, he is worried that, hearing Christian ideas, some simple-minded people might be led astray.[31]

The reply of the Christian is conciliatory, admitting that Christians often ask these same questions among themselves. Now, in his counter-argument he will be guided by reason (*duce ratione*). In the following passages, the Christian gives a lengthy explanation of God's will and the ideas of salvation history, justice, sin, the new law in Christ and Biblical interpretation, mainly using traditional forms of argument. He even pleads with the Pagan to hear the testimony of the Scriptures to understand his beliefs.[32] Yet, interrupting the Christian, the Pagan asks him not to proceed further, but rather to explain a seemingly great discord between the Old and the New Testament and the disharmony between Christian books, the expositors of the books and teachers.[33] The Pagan contends that those who accept both Old and New Testaments have more confusion in their interpretation of the laws and scriptures than pagans who do not accept either of the Testaments.[34]

The Christian answers rather unwearyingly that there are many things he wishes to say, if the Pagan only has patience. He will give answers, but not in order, because Christians usually talk about the simplicity and the eternal unity of God only among the faithful.[35] The Christian next aims to show that the Testaments do not disagree, but whenever they are aptly understood, they are in harmony.[36] The Christian's persuasion is strong enough to satisfy the Pagan on some points. However, he still insists that the Christian should explain the idea of Christ's two natures, human and divine, since the Pagan finds this among the most inappropriate. The Christian explains that God has taken the human form in the unity of person, without changing the properties of either nature.[37] The Pagan considers the Christian's Christological doctrines and the question of divine omnipotence, but his conclusion is aporistic. He then formulates a standard critique of theism: if God wants bad things, where is his justice, if he does not want them, where is his omnipotence? In whatever way man disputes about God, God does what he wants, there being no strength or council against God. The Pagan would have preferred to rationally discuss the Trinity in particular, but finds out that his Christian opponent fails to fulfil his expectations: "You cannot show me any reason, you don't have strength to twist the assent in your art of disputation".[38]

At this point, Gilbert's treatise breaks off; the Pagan gets disappointed and leaves. The limits of rational reasoning with an unbeliever become visible as the central Christian doctrines are considered. However, the discussion continues, the assembly of bystanders insisting that it is necessary to continue the dialogue, since the Pagan did not know how to discover the rationality in the Christian faith. After this, one among the listeners continues the dialogue as a disciple, the Christian taking the master's role. In the succeeding passages, the disciple and the master discuss the Trinity, Gilbert showing his scepticism about the possibility of persuading either Jews or pagans about the Trinity.[39]

Against the claims of the Jews and pagans, Gilbert argues that there is no absurdity in the Trinity, the thing itself implying no contrariety. Still, even Gilbert himself doubts the abilities of some Christians to

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31 *Disputatio cum gentili* 29–31, 69. Later the Christian also mentions that God's simplicity is fundamental Christian doctrine to be discussed only between believers. See below.

32 *Disputatio cum gentili* 44.22–23, 72: 'Audi super hoc Scripturarum testimonia, non quidem ut adquiescas...'

33 *Disputatio cum gentili* 48, 73.

34 *Disputatio cum gentili* 51, 74.

35 *Disputatio cum gentili* 54, 74.

36 *Disputatio cum gentili* 61, 76.

37 *Disputatio cum gentili* 66–69, 77–78.

38 *Disputatio cum gentili* 82, 81: 'Si enim mala uult, que eius iustitia? Si non uult, que eius omnipotentia? ... minime uis disputare, quia nec ratione aliqua mihi posses ostendere, nec assensum aliqua disputationis arte valeres extorquere'. Cf. *Disputatio Iudei* 117, 39. The bad things seem to refer to the sufferings of Christ.

39 *Disputatio cum gentili* 87–90, 82. For the analysis of Gilbert's Trinitarian ideas and their relation to Anselm's thinking, see Abulafia "Disputing", 139–140.

profoundly cognize the mysteries of the Trinity. He acknowledges that young children are not capable of understanding the Trinity, neither is the laity; but, being baptized, they will still be saved.[40]

In Gilbert's dialogue, the central principle of judgement in the discussion is reason, first in the dialogue with the Pagan and its continuation with the disciple. During the twelfth century, this could mean that the method attempts to be axiomatic, knowledge departing from presupposed self-evident premises and proceeding by strictly rational demonstration.[41] However, Gilbert seldom uses intuited self-evident propositions accepted by anyone on hearing them. Only the rational demonstration of God's existence and goodness, as well as some ideas of human nature stand out as axiomatic and agreed by both parties. Instead, Gilbert extends the rational reasoning to evaluate the inner coherence of Christian beliefs. This is shown particularly in the discussions of Scriptures and authorities as well as in the rationality of some Christian doctrines. Hence, both voices in the dialogue interpret their common agreement to use reason as their only guide rather loosely. The mutually agreed rational arguments or rules of thought based on reason are not explicitly discussed, but it is possible to conjecture that they include at least the basic laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction and the request for the coherence of ideas.

In Gilbert's dialogue, both the Pagan and the Christian can discuss the rational premises and the inner coherence of Christian beliefs. The dialogic form offers a medium for an examination of the limits of rational argument. Gilbert is critical about applying rational arguments only when discussing the Trinity. He also holds that some people are more simple-minded than others, being incapable of sophisticated rational thinking. These people will never understand some Christian beliefs, although they can still believe them. On the basis of Gilbert's overall approach, even the Pagan can sometimes reason more about the issues at stake than the ordinary Christian layperson.

Generally speaking, Gilbert operates exclusively with the two specific identities of a Christian and a Pagan. However, the distinction between simple-minded and rationally sophisticated people can be seen as creating some problems of cross-classification between identities, because apparently, both Pagans and Christians can be either simple or sophisticated. The breaking off of the dialogue when the limits of rational reasoning are encountered is also highly interesting. This is because the situation raises systematic questions about the relations between the dimensions of respect and esteem: Is it possible to perform so badly in a dialogue or in a rational encounter (i.e., to receive so little esteem for one's reasons) that one thereby loses one's respect-based normative status as an equal participant in a meaningful dialogue? The Pagan's judgement of certain Christian beliefs as insane, mad or absurd, his declaration that the Christian does not have the strength to twist the assent in his art of disputation together with the Pagan's ensuing departure would at least seem to suggest an affirmative answer. On the other hand, from the point of view of mediated recognition between the parties of the dialogue, we have seen that the text incorporates various unifying and conciliatory features such as shared beliefs and common principles of logic. Consequently, these can be interpreted as mediating instruments of mutual recognition.

Peter Alfonsi: Scientific Speculations and Natural Philosophy

Peter Alfonsi was a Christian convert who was raised as a Jew in a Muslim society.[42] The first, rudimentary stage of *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* introduces a Jew and a Christian discussing their primary beliefs. As the author defines the interlocutors, the person who defends Christian beliefs is called Peter and the adversary

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40 *Disputatio cum gentili* 108, 87.

41 For these axiomatic self-evident propositions, see Boethius' *Hebdomadibus*, 38–4 and *De Topicis Differentiis* 1, 4, 7 (PL 64, 1176CD). Boethius translated and commented Aristotle's logical works (Categories, De interpretatione, Topics, Sophistical refutations and Prior Analytics). Prior Analytics, Sophistical refutations, and Topics, the core of the so-called *logica nova*, was largely used only at the end of 12th century. See Grant, *God*, 40–45. For the developments in scientific method in medieval theology and its ancient sources, see, e.g., Lewry, "Boethian" and Holopainen, *Dialectic*.

42 Tolan, *Alfonsi*, xiv. Scholarship on Alfonsi is a rapidly expanding field. A new volume of essays on him has just appeared; see *Petrus Alfonsi and his* Dialogus: *Background, Context, Reception*, ed. Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann and Philipp Roelli, 2014. A new edition of Alfonsi's *Dialogi* is forthcoming.

of these beliefs is a Jewish man called Moses.[43] These two actors turn out to represent the author's previous Jewish self Moses and the new Christian self, Peter. In this treatise, Peter wishes to argue about the truth of the Christian faith, being confident that he is able to repudiate all other beliefs, destroying them with both reason and authority.[44] Peter at least partially directs his words to his adversaries, i.e., his former Jewish society, defending his new belief and personal choices. He might also be thinking of his new Christian co-religionists, assuring them that his conversion is genuine, as well as advertising his own thinking and ideas in general.

In addition to Peter's and Moses' common sources of authorities, i.e., the Old Testament, reason stands as the first principal of the argument.[45] As the allusions to their past show, the abilities and education of Peter and Moses are the same and they share the same basic skills in disputation.[46] The general tone is congenial, occasionally even friendly. Both Peter and Moses actively comment and suggest the rules for the argument.[47] Sometimes the interlocutors compliment one another by praising what the other says.[48]

The mutually agreed commitment to discuss the central philosophical and theological issues such as the existence of God shows in Peter's lofty address to Moses to join him in the great palace of reason and argue together in a pleasant atmosphere.[49] The differences between opinions are presented as enjoyable, the diversity of opinions being likened to a field of flowers. Peter is also confident that some of these opinions will serve as steps for proving God's existence. The rational demonstration of God's existence is a shared mission for Peter and Moses and their arguments are equally valid in this endeavour.

If Moses agrees with Peter about God's existence already, who is Peter trying to persuade? In the following conversation, Peter fluently partakes in philosophical discussion, arguing against 'certain philosophers' and their Aristotelian notion of the eternity of the world, after which he defends the Platonist idea of the world soul, with some qualifications.[50] Moses is eager to hear Peter's argument, saying that it is valuable for him to learn how God's existence can be proven by philosophical reasoning only.[51] The demonstration of God's existence is an objective they share and their arguments are equally valid. It appears that the pleasant flowers of opinion refer to philosophical or rational arguments, but not to religious doctrines or authorities at all.

Peter says explicitly that his demonstrations are adequate for those who do not believe in the testimony of Scripture. As an example of rational argument, Peter assesses that although nature has made different forms by its powers, it needs some restrictor which itself is not restricted by anything else.[52] Moses suggests that the soul cannot be the restrictor, since its wisdom is imperfect and it also suffers from the vicissitudes of pleasures and pains. According to Peter's philosophical conception of the soul, the restrictor of the soul and perfect wisdom is God.[53] With the help of Peter's philosophical exposition, Moses becomes more erudite and understands that if God is omnipotent, then why did it take several days to create the world.[54] This cosmological discussion has no confessional quality whatsoever.

Although several pages in the *Dialogi* are devoted to scriptural exegesis and to linguistic analysis of the Hebrew bible, Alfonsi introduces many arguments drawn from physics, medicine, and astronomy,

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43 *Dialogi* prol. 2.24–26 (PL 157, 538BC).

44 *Dialogi* prol. 2.1–20 (PL 157, 537B-538A).

45 *Dialogi* prol. 3.26–32; 4.6–9 (PL 157, 539B). For a brief evaluation of Alfonsi's idea of reasoning and its difference from *a priori* reasoning in Anselm of Canterbury and Gilbert of Crispin, see Santi, "Pietro", 23–37.

46 *Dialogi* prol. 3.37–39 (PL 157, 539A). Cf. *Epistola ad peripateticos* I, 164.

47 *Dialogi* prol. 5.34–39 (PL 157, 541A).

48 See, for instance, Moses' praise in *Dialogi* I, 15.26–27 (PL 157, 550D). Cf. Peter's reply to Moses in *Dialogi* IX, 124.27–28 (PL 157, 654C): 'Bene dixisti, et bene Scripturas intelligere te demonstrati et contrarium nullum posuisti.'

49 *Dialogi* I, 19.28–32 (PL 157, 554D–555A).

50 For the identification of Alfonsi's sources as Pseudo-Aristotle's *De elementis* and the works of Rhases and Qusta ibn Luqa, see D'Alverny, "Pseudo", 62–83; Burnett, "Scientific", 979–981. For the influence of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de Causis* in twelfth-century scientific speculations, see Lohr, "Pseudo-Aristotelian", 53–62.

51 *Dialogi* I, 19.41–43 (PL 157, 555A)

52 *Dialogi* I, 22.30–36 (PL 157, 558A); *Dialogi* I, 22.40– 23.1–9 (PL 157, 558BC).

53 *Dialogi* I, 23.15–19 (PL 157, 558D).

54 *Dialogi* I, 28.8–11 (PL 157, 563C).

defending his position by using specific arguments from natural philosophy, which are characterized as being founded on reason.[55] However, unlike in Gilbert's texts, this rationality is based on premises which are deduced from the experience of the sensible world.[56] Most of these arguments are composed in order to refute the Jews' supposed anthropological view of God 'philosophically'. As Alfonsi puts it, contemporary Jews were deceived by their Talmudic sages who describe God as a bodily entity.[57] Because Jews didn't accept the Christian interpretation of certain Biblical prophesies, Alfonsi thought that they accepted only literal interpretation in all the verses of the Bible. As a consequence of this, he offers several examples of the Jewish understanding of Biblical or Talmudic verses, first explaining how Jews interpret them literally and then contesting these explanations with arguments based on his extensive contemporary medical and astronomical knowledge.

For example, Peter claims that the 'Jews' consider that God grows angry once a day, and argues against this idea by analysing the humours of the body and the physical process associated with anger. If God is angry, he has to have a body, which is blasphemy.[58] In a similar fashion, Peter describes the Jews claiming that God's tears are flowing down and are seen in the sky as lighting, and then refutes this idea with an analysis of the production of tears and humidity in the head.[59] Thus Peter aims to show that several Talmudic passages contradict either reason or some scientific fact and on that basis should be refuted.[60] Peter also explains some medical ideas concerning the complexion of elements and how they exist in the human body.[61] Moses seems to be very pleased to be able to learn so much about the physical world, the human body, and certain empirical facts.[62] The dialogue often resembles a conversation between a student and a master with Moses asking for more elucidation in several points. He specifically requests Peter to explain things through an argument from nature.[63] Such arguments are considered to be strong in the sense that they refer to necessary reason. This kind of knowledge can be found particularly in astronomy, Peter's favourite art.[64]

In addition to the arguments from natural philosophy, Peter also refers to rational arguments *per se*, as already shown in the demonstration of God's necessary existence. The discussion about the resurrection of bodies is a fine example of the author's idea of the three valid methods for argumentation; the physical, the rational, and the one based on authority. As part of the discussion of Christ's resurrection, Peter mentions Elijah, whose body ascended in the presence of Elisha, asking Moses if this can be explained both rationally and physically. The discussion starts with a 'physical' explanation, when Moses notes that Elijah ate very little and was therefore able to become subtle and ascend. Peter himself then gives a rational demonstration,

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55 In this connection, natural philosophy means mainly medical and astronomical theories of the time. In his *Epistola*, Peter writes that while it is useful to know arithmetic, geometry and music, the most important sciences are medicine and astronomy. See *Epistola* 4–6, 165–166. Medicine and astronomy were not experiential in the modern sense, although Alfonsi's text refers to experience relatively often and acknowledges the importance of direct observation. See, for instance, *Epistola* 18, 171. For Alfonsi's scientific background, see Resnick, "Introduction", 11n.23, 19. For the importance of scientific knowledge among the Spanish Jews in al-Andalus, see Ferre, "Place", 21–34. For scientific speculation in the twelfth century, see Burnett, "Scientific", 151–176.

56 As Burnett notes, it is possible to identify two rational methods of reasoning in the twelfth century. The first is axiomatic reasoning, which uses self-evident premises and leads to necessary truths, whereas the second is founded on premises taken from the sense experiences, but still based on rational, philosophical opinion. Burnett, "Scientific", 170.

57 Alfonsi, among others, isolated specific anthropomorphic descriptions of God found in rabbinic literature, claiming that all Jews interpreted these passages literally. This assumption led Alfonsi to hold that Jews were not able to read any Biblical passage allegorically. For this topic, see Abulafia, "Bodies", 126–129.

58 *Dialogi* I, 14.25–37 (PL 157, 549D). Resnick considers Alfonsi's theories as uncommon; however, Alfonsi seems to have been familiar with Arabic medical texts, e.g., Constantine the African's *Pantegni*, to some extent. Resnick 2012, 302. For Alfonsi's contribution to medieval medical discussion on humoral theories, see Resnick, "Humoralism", 181–195.

59 *Dialogi* I, 15.8–19 (PL 157, 550BC).

60 Tolan, *Alfonsi*, 22.

61 *Dialogi* X, 110.17–21. (PL 157, 642AB). See Resnick, "Humoralism", 181–195.

62 *Dialogi* I, 15.26–27 (PL 157, 550D); *Dialogi* I, 20.20–22 (PL 157, 555D).

63 *Dialogi* I, 7.43–44 (PL 157, 543B): 'Nunc autem a te exigo, ut id ostendas per nature rationem'.

64 *Dialogi* I, 10–11. Peter argues against certain 'false' astrological opinions, insisting that it is important to use clear vision or observation. Here the necessary reason in natural philosophy is supported by observations. See *Dialogi* I, 12.17–18.

referring to the fact Christ's body was holy after the resurrection and he had to leave the filthiness of this world and rise to heaven. Moses is satisfied with these arguments from reason, but still asks Peter to prove all this by citing authorities as well, which Peter does gladly.[65] In Peter Alfonsi's thinking, philosophical reasoning and arguments based on natural philosophy have important roles, since they sometimes exceed even the authority of Scripture and faith. Moses is thankful for Peter's philosophical lessons, but is later worried that simple-minded people presumably cannot understand the depth of these arguments, asking whether Peter could convince such people with the testimony of the law and the prophets too.[66]

Alfonsi's strong commitment to natural philosophy and Arabic scientific speculation shows well in his *Epistola ad peripateticos*, where he rages against ignorant French theologians who retain their inferior astronomical texts instead of accepting better Arabic theories.[67] Interestingly he also considers the studies of grammar as less important, suggesting the scheme of arts adopted from Arabic traditions.[68] This implicitly affirms how Alfonsi considers the knowledge of natural sciences to be universal in the sense that it exceeds cultural variables (e.g. different languages and their grammar) which vary from place to place.

In the subsequent chapters of the *Dialogi*, the author turns to consider several Christian doctrines in order to defend them. He continues to use arguments from reason, but alludes to the authority of Scripture more frequently. Interestingly, Moses asks Peter to argue *sola ratione* on behalf of the Trinity.[69] As a response, Peter claims that three persons reside in the Trinity. These can be identified as substance, wisdom, and will, the first person being substance, and wisdom and willing coming from it. This pattern can be discovered by reason. He also explains that the creator has to know what it wills in advance in order to make anything at all, since to fabricate something in reality, the creator has to first form things in his mind by imagining. According to Peter, this imagination is the wisdom of the creator.[70]

Moses continues the speculation on his behalf, claiming that substance, will, and knowledge all exist in God and are not separated from him. Peter is pleased to hear Moses' reply, blessing him for his understanding.[71] In this example, the Jewish person can comprehend some Trinitarian axioms through his powers of reasoning.[72] However, as Peter adds, he has been discussing the Trinity with Moses superficially in order to offer him at least some understanding of these subtle matters, which can be discussed in more depth only between Christians.[73] Even if some Christian doctrines cannot be supported by necessary reason, it is possible to show that they are not contrary to reason. For instance, Christ's ascension was not against the principles of physics and reason.[74] Evidently Peter wishes to demonstrate that he can find scientific and rational arguments to support his most fundamental Christian beliefs as well.

The dialogue reveals the author's broad notion of rational argumentation through his own multicultural personal history, shown in his dialogue with his former self. The author uses Moses to discuss a number of topics that he is interested in, the pragmatics of dialogical conversation allowing him an opportunity to advertise novel ideas in natural sciences as well as in other fields of thought. Basically, reason can be used in two different ways, naturally and rationally. Christians have an extraordinary ability to use natural

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65 *Dialogi* XI, 122.12–14 (PL 157, 652C). Peter considers the scope of reason extensive. The 'reason' in Christ's resurrection is not the result of logical demonstration, but is partly dependent on Scriptural authority. Cf. *Dialogi* X, 117.25–29 (PL 157, 648C).

66 *Dialogi* III, 51.20–25 (PL 157, 586D).

67 Tolan, *Alfonsi*, xiii. In his *Epistola*, Peter suggests a new catalogue of liberal arts, which omits both grammar and rhetoric, two fundamental subjects of the *trivium*. The reason for this is that their knowledge is not subject to argument and the knowledge of them varies between languages. See *Epistola* 2, 165. Alfonsi's compilation of Arabic fables and proverbs, *Disciplina Clericalis*, proves his positive account of Arabic moral teaching and philosophy as well. *Disciplina Clericalis* prol, 154; IV, 168, 170.

68 See Tolan, *Alfonsi*, 70–71.

69 *Dialogi* VI, 73.25–26 (PL 157, 606C): 'Explana ergo, quid sint he tres personae, et hoc primum rationabiliter.'

70 *Dialogi* VI, 73.38–p.74.1–4 (PL 157, 606D). The association of imagination with the Trinity is an original idea. For this, see Palmén, *Imagination*, 241n.64, 248–251.

71 *Dialogi* VI, 74.22–23 (PL 157, 607B): 'Benedicat te deus, quia bene intellexisti veritatem et concessisti, et bonam fidem te habere monstrasti.'

72 The question of the rational proofs of the Trinity occurs frequently in twelfth-century disputations. Cf. Gilbert Crispin's dialogue, where only the Christians are able to understand Trinitarian axioms. *Dialogus cum gentili*, 82–83, 81.

73 *Dialogi* VI, 75.14–17 (PL 157, 608AB).

74 *Dialogi* XI, 122.18–30 (PL 157, 652CD).

arguments, which means that they are entitled to use scientific arguments on their behalf. In addition, they can use 'pure reason' as well, being able to form necessary arguments to support their faith. Although the Christian is in control, the rules of the dialogue grant the Jew much space to argue on his own behalf, to use the arguments from reason up to a certain point and to understand the Christian's arguments adequately.

In terms of identities, Alfonsi operates in his dialogue with those of a Christian and a Jew. What makes Alfonsi's text particularly interesting in this respect are the temporal dimensions related to his moment of conversion, and the fact that Peter and Moses consequently represent the author's own current and previous selves before and after the religious identity-change. From a systematic point of view, Alfonsi thus provides an extremely interesting historical case and a potential testing ground for theoretical discussions of individual, cultural, and religious identities. In addition to authorities and rational arguments *per se*, Alfonsi also characteristically emphasizes the important role of arguments from natural philosophy and from the experience of the sensible world. This 'empirical dimension' clearly acts as yet another common mediating level of discourse between Peter and Moses, helping to ground mutual respect and esteem between them. From the perspective of the notion of mediated recognition, it is also central to note that the knowledge of natural sciences is assumed to be *universal* and therefore also something that goes *beyond cultural variables*.

Peter Abelard: Moral Philosophy and the Good Life

Peter Abelard was first and foremost acknowledged as a skilled logician, but also known as a controversial character, creating enemies and difficulties for himself in various places in Northern France.[75] As with many dialogues of the genre, *Collationes* deals with the authority of reason and the range of argumentation, different religious or ideological opinions, and originally, moral philosophy. It consists of two separate dialogues, with three characters. The first dialogue is held between a Jew and a Philosopher, presented as a circumcised descendant of Ishmaelites, about the differences between the natural and the revealed law in the Old Testament, whereas in the second dialogue, the Philosopher disputes with a Christian about the greatest good and evil.[76]

Similarly with the dialogues of Gilbert and Alfonsi, Abelard includes in his work a dialogical reflection between discordant actors concerning the common rules for the discussion. The judging parameter is reason, but the shared plane for rationality is exploited in the realm of morals. The book begins with an allusion to a dream vision, where three characters in the dialogue, coming along different paths, approach the narrator (Abelard himself), asking him to act as the judge in their disputation about their faiths. The Jew and the Christian have their scriptures, but the Philosopher is content with the natural law; however, they are all said to worship one God.[77] The initiator of the discussion is the Philosopher, who stresses the importance of investigating the truth by reasoning alone and then proceeds to define moral philosophy as the goal of all fields of knowledge. Moral philosophy itself considers the issue of the greatest good and how people can grasp it. He wishes to compare various faiths and to follow the one most consonant with reason, but soon famously defines Jews as stupid and Christians as mad.[78] In the next two dialogues, it appears that the Philosopher wishes to see whether either of the faiths agrees with reason.

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75 For Abelard's life and works, see Mews, "Abelard"; Marenbon, *Philosophy*, 7–95 and Marenbon, *Dimensions*. See also analyses by Mann, "Ethics", 279–304 and Holopainen, "Intentions", 213–229.

76 For a summary of the work, see Marenbon, "Introduction", civ–cxix. For Abelard's account of Jews, see Mews, "Abelard". For a recent discussion of Abelard's contradictory views on Jews, see Sweeney, "Abelard". For a broad overview of medieval ideas on Jews, see Dahan, *Les intellectuels*.

77 *Collationes* 1, 2. On the basis of the preface, it is palusible to claim that Abelard thinks that ultimately all the characters of the dialogue believe in same unique God, but they do it in their own ways (*diversa fide et vita*). Cf. Abelard's *Theologia Scholarium*, pp. 356, l. 1080–357, l. 1083: 'Philosophos autem unum tantummodo deum cognoscere unus ex ipsis, Tullius in I Rethoricorum, perhibet dicens "Eos qui philosophię dant operam non arbitrari deos esse", ac si aperte dicat: immo deum unum, non deos plures'; cf. also ivi, I 113, pp. 362, l. 1255–363, l. 1269, concerning the special form of fides of the philosophers.

78 *Collationes* 1–3, 2,4. Later, however, the Philosopher explains that his insulting expression was just meant to provoke the discussion. See *Collationes* 63, 80. Cf. Continuation to Gilbert Crispin's *Disputatio Iudei* 25, 60.23–24, in which Christians are said to call the Jews mad, but they themselves are claimed to be completely insane. See also *Disputatio cum gentili* 5, 62.28–29.

After hearing the flattery of the Philosopher about the eminence of Abelard's knowledge, Abelard consents to act as a judge. Although the Philosopher appeals to reason and is said to be much more erudite in philosophical reasoning than the others, he is also allowed to use arguments from Scripture against his protagonists. The Philosopher is said to have "two swords in the dispute", written authority and reasoning, whereas the Jew and the Christian are not permitted to use any objections founded on written law against the Philosopher. On that basis, Abelard considers that the Philosopher is better equipped for the fight. All the actors of the dialogue are said to have a mutual agreement about these common rules, each of them also being confident in their own powers of argument.[79]

In the first dialogue, the Philosopher enquires how people choose their faiths. The main concern is whether people use their reason when they adopt some system of religious beliefs. He suggests that people adopt their religion from their upbringing, instead of considering the issue rationally. This is because people are not allowed to ask questions or doubt commonly accepted religious beliefs. He shows obvious resentment against those who are eager to boast about their faith but cannot speak about it or understand it intellectually.[80] The Jew admits that although children learn to follow the religion as it is taught, as adults, however, the Jews still evaluate their beliefs rationally.[81] He might be unable to compel the Philosopher to believe that the law was given by God, but the Philosopher is not able to refute it either.[82] The law itself cannot be repudiated by reasoning, even though both of them will remain in doubt about whether God set up this law. Still, the Jew's conscience advises him to follow the law. He also refers to the harshness of their present lives and the sufferings they have endured, saying that if God would not reward the Jews for obeying the Old Law, he would be very cruel.[83]

The Jew's account does not convince the Philosopher, who questions whether the Jews have the right intention in their serving of God, since all followers of any faith believe that their deeds please God.[84] In the following exchange of opinions, both characters agree that the natural law is an equally binding moral principle which can be understood with rational thinking only.[85] The Philosopher proceeds to show how Jewish beliefs are contrary to reason, arguing on the basis of their own written law. The patriarchs of the Old Testament lived their lives according to natural law and were still pleasing God. It is also doubtful whether the Old Law can be seen as a sign of divine favour at all if one reflects on the Jews' admittedly terrible sufferings.[86] In his counter-argument, the Jew explains that they consider that the Old Law maintains exactly the same commands as the natural law, that is, the request to love both God and one's fellow humans, the Old Law only adding some external observances in order to maintain the Jewish way of life, which adds to a happy earthly life.[87] The first dialogue ends when the Philosopher says that the Jew has not been able to persuade him to submit to the authority of the Old Law, and he will continue to follow the natural law.[88]

The second dialogue, held between the Philosopher and a Christian, discusses the nature of the greatest good and evil and how they can be achieved. The dialogue continues the theme of the natural law, with both the Philosopher and the Christian agreeing that the natural law should be followed by all. Later the Philosopher distinguishes between the natural and positive justice as well. He argues that innate reason urges us to put natural justice - such as worshipping one God or punishing the wicked - into effect. Natural justice does not vary from place to place, unlike positive justice, which is different in different places.[89] Here Abelard is explicitly thinking about the limits of mutually binding natural law, natural justice, and moral philosophy.

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79 *Collationes* 5, 6.
80 *Collationes* 7–8, 8–12.
81 *Collationes* 12, 14.
82 *Collationes* 13, 14.
83 *Collationes* 14–15, 16, 18.
84 *Collationes* 18, 22.
85 *Collationes* 45, 54.
86 *Collationes* 19–20, 24.
87 *Collationes* 43, 52: 'Quam perfectam autem Dei uel proximi dilectionem, in quibus legem naturalem consistere dicis, lex ipsa precipiat, non te reor latere.'
88 *Collationes* 60, 4.
89 *Collationes* 133–134, 144.

The Christian incorporates the idea of the natural law as part of his Christian doctrines, claiming that it actually originates from the Wisdom of God, i.e., Christ. The Philosopher responds with an important summary concerning the authorities and their usefulness. He repeats his main conviction that people should follow reason, not authorities, since there is a variety of authorities to choose from, and the power of argument of the authorities is actually based on their ability to reason. Arguments established on authority are also considered to be the weakest ones.[90] Some Christian writers, including Augustine, also underscore the art of disputation.[91] The Christian agrees that the authorities may suggest doubtful interpretations, and their arguments omit the persuasive strength compared to the arguments from reason. He also acknowledges that the arguments based on authorities are not valid when discussing them with someone who does not share the same doctrines and Scriptures. The Christian then explicates the main paradigm for all dialogical texts in this article, which is that a person can be disputed with only on the basis of what he agrees to, since he will be convinced merely through what he accepts. This dictum justifies the Christian in choosing different conduct in his dispute with the Philosopher from disputations with his Christian fellows.[92] Abelard is clearly well aware that the allusions to Scripture and other authorities are not compelling arguments against the Philosopher, who is made sharply to criticise the Christian for quoting the Bible even though the Christian knows that such arguments are not persuasive in the disputation.[93]

Although the Philosopher and the Christian disagree about the authorities, the discussion about the greatest good and greatest evil is something that they both can mutually reason about. The Philosopher starts by defining the greatest good as something such that when one attains it, it makes him happy, and greatest evil as that which makes people who follow it wretched.[94] According to the Christian, the greatest good is the happiness of the life to come and the virtues are the way of attaining it, whereas the greatest evil is eternal death and punishment. The Philosopher accepts the Christian's claim that heavenly happiness is the greatest good, but adds that the same idea was supported by Epicurus, one of his philosophical ancestors as well. For Epicurus, pleasure means inner peacefulness and a clear conscience, which can be equated with a virtuous life and the greatest good. Stressing the importance of the virtuous life, the Philosopher thinks that the person gains the greatest good through being virtuous. Pleasure in turn means the same thing as the Kingdom of Heaven.[95] The Christian's next argument is dependent on the Scriptures, but he integrates a sophisticated argument about disembodied spirits and their non-spatiality into it. He favours a non-literal interpretation of heaven and hell, claiming that being blessed refers to experiencing the vision of God, whereas the punishments of hell can be made into action by prolonging the pain of dying eternally.[96]

The dialogue ends with the Philosopher's plea to define 'good' and 'evil'. This analysis of 'good' does not refer to Scripture or other authorities and can be seen as a fundamental part of the non-culturally defined moral philosophy in this discussion. The Philosopher requests that the Christian defines what 'good' and 'evil' generally (*generaliter*) speaking are, adding that they should also try to define 'indifferent' things, i.e., things that are neither good nor bad. Only this knowledge will help them to fully understand what the greatest good and evil are. Both interlocutors acknowledge that often people start to give examples of good or evil things, but the senses of these words change because of the words attached to them. The Christian suggests that one may use the word 'good' when saying that someone is good, i.e., skilled at doing something. We may also say that someone or something is 'good' without any particular qualification (*simpliciter*). A thing is good in an unqualified sense if it is fitted for some use, and there is no thing the dignity (*diginitas*) or convenience (*commodum*) of which is necessarily obstructed by it.[97] Usefulness is quite an imprecise requirement for 'good' and not a very effective way to define it, since all that it seems

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90 *Collationes* 73, 74, 92.

91 *Collationes* 76, 96.

92 *Collationes* 78: 'Nemo quippe argui nisi ex concessis potest, nec nisi per ea que recipit conuincendus est.'

93 *Collationes* 168, 178.

94 *Collationes* 80, 100.

95 *Collationes* 87, 1 08; 141, 151. For Abelard's surprising reference to Epicurus, see Marenbon, "Introduction", lxix–lxxi.

96 *Collationes* 163–165, 172–176; 173, 184; 185, 192; 194, 198, 200.

97 *Collationes* 201–203, 202, 204; 224, 220.

to entail is that the thing is able to do good. The latter requirement about dignity and convenience is more compound. It presupposes that something is good if it does not damage a thing's intrinsic value (dignity) or impede a thing from achieving its desires.

As noted by some commentators, Abelard's main interest in *Collationes* is to explore the role of reason in moral philosophy and religion, and not the polemics against either Judaism or the philosophers.[98] In general, Abelard's account of reason in *Collationes* is wide-ranging, holding that Jews, philosophers and Christians have equally innate rational abilities to reason about various fundamental ethical questions and moral philosophy. His dialogue incorporates several philosophical questions and approving allusions to philosophers of Antiquity. Even the Trinity and other holy doctrines can and should be understood by rational reasoning.[99] The distinctions between the revealed Christian truths and the opinions of the Jew and the Philosopher are not always sharply drawn, the discussion showing elements of mutual exchange of ideas between equals. Abelard also thinks that the gentiles naturally do things that are of the natural law, the principles of which can be understood by all humans capable of using their reason, morality thus being autonomous. However, some central differences can still be found. For instance, without the expectation of a reward, the treatises' main question about the nature of the greatest good (*summum bonum*) remains undefined and the moral law and virtues remain indecisive.[100]

In *Collationes*, Abelard uses the identity of a Philosopher in distinct combinations with a Jew on the one hand and a Christian on the other. Moreover, an original emphasis is provided by Abelard's use of the specific realm of *moral philosophy* as the field of application for the shared principles of rationality. Especially interesting in this connection is the discussion of *natural* and *positive justice*, since with this very distinction, the limits of the mediating common field of rationality are also charted in the dialogue. A common rational field that unites different participants of the dialogue and goes beyond cultural specifics is also utilized in the attempt to define 'good' and 'evil'. When such mediating elements are actually operational, the mutual exchange of ideas between equals can also constitute a form of respect towards the other. On this foundational level of respect, the attempt to acquire esteem can be then based on argumentative merit.

Conclusion

Many medieval disputations share the idea that in order to start a discussion or a dialogue between representatives of different ideas or religions, the disputants have to approve its common parameters. Thus, it is usual to discuss the techniques and strategies for constructing valid arguments in the disputation to some extent. The pragmatics of disputation are quite similar in that the respondent can be persuaded only on the basis of what he agrees to, since a person is convinced merely through what he accepts. The judging principle is agreed to be reason, scripture, or a combination of these. Presentation of arguments from authority for defending one's own ideas is usually allowed, but only if the opponent concurs with the authority of the same sources. However, it is also possible to use authorities against those who believe in them; e.g., the Pagan may refer to the Hebrew Bible and construct arguments against the Jew. Various interpretations of the same authorities often complicate the disputation. In addition to these theoretical approaches, the sources share some pragmatic rules of interaction, such as a generally mild attitude, amicability and positive rhetorical communication.

The sources of this study demonstrate attempts to construe a culturally- or religiously-neutral field of discussion in which the rules of the dialogue are agreed upon and the principles are shared by all

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98 See, especially, von Moos, "Les *Collationes*".

99 Marenbon, "Introduction", lvi–lvii. In his theological treatises, although Abelard often emphasizes the unknowability of God, he also argues that the divine itself is comprehensible and uses pagan philosophical sources to demonstrate the doctrine of the Trinity. The philosophical intelligibility of the Trinity entails that even a Jew and a Gentile are able to understand it. For Abelard's theological aims, see Marenbon, *Philosophy*, 54–79. For Abelard's theory of the veiled knowledge of Ancient philosophers, see Marenbon, *Pagans*, 73–94.

100 See Abelard's treatment of natural law in Mann, "Ethics", 292–293.

participants in the disputation. Once the arguments have been tested and found to be strong in this kind of context, they can be claimed to be valid. All three dialogues share a common obligation to use reason, which is considered as the power of the mind to think and form valid judgements plausibly, without appealing to religious doctrines or culturally-contingent variables. The authors appeal to pure reason, i.e., rational demonstration at the conceptual level, define reason as something which can be supported by natural philosophy, or use the human capacity to reason in moral philosophy. Occasionally the interlocutors also evaluate the general rationality of their opponents' system of beliefs. Gilbert Crispin is most sceptical about the range of reasoning, claiming that it is impossible to comprehend the greatest Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity, by reasoning alone. Abelard, in turn, tries to apply reason in moral philosophy, stressing the importance of understanding the Christian doctrines rationally. The most extensive use of reason can be found in works of Peter Alfonsi, the former Jew. In his dialogue, the author appeals to both pure reason and natural philosophy. Moreover, in his *Disciplina Clericalis*, he also shows his confidence in the possibility of discussing the basic principles of moral philosophy without reference to any religious doctrines whatsoever.

To effect mediated recognition in the dimensions of respect and esteem, and to contribute to the quest for a common rational field of discussion, it is necessary to articulate elements that transcend particular differences and manage to construct a form of unity between the participants of a dialogue. This kind of mediation is attempted, and to a certain extent also achieved, by all three of our authors, each with his own specific emphasis. Gilbert focuses on rational argumentation *per se*, Alfonsi highlights the role of empirical knowledge and natural philosophy, while Abelard brings moral philosophy and the good life to the fore. A central part of the dialogical nature of this overall process is the gradual negotiation and solidification of the mutually-accepted common ground. This process in itself both presupposes and further develops interpersonal relations of recognition.

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