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This book offers a major reassessment of the philosophy of Peter Abelard (1079–1142) which argues that he was not, as usually presented, a predominantly critical thinker but a constructive one. By way of evidence the author offers new analyses of frequently discussed topics in Abelard's philosophy, and examines other areas such as the nature of substances and accidents, cognition, the definition of 'good' and 'evil', virtues and merit, and practical ethics in detail for the first time.

Part I discusses Abelard's life and works, and considers problems of chronology and canon (including the question of the authenticity of the correspondence with Heloise). Part II analyses Abelard's ontology, epistemology and semantics, showing how he tried to reconstruct the ideas he had learned from Aristotle, Porphyry and Boethius to fit his presumption that there is nothing which is not a particular. Part III analyses Abelard's ethical theory, showing that it is far wider and more sophisticated than has been believed.

'... he has produced not only an outstanding exposition of Abelard's philosophy, but a work that opens up for specialists and non-specialists the world of twelfth-century thought.'

William J. Courtenay in *The Times Literary Supplement*

'John Marenbon has buried himself in Abelard's writings and in the writings of his contemporaries, and produced what must be the most scholarly account to date of Abelard's ideas.'

Roger Scruton in *The Times*

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The philosophy of
PETER ABELARD



John Marenbon
Trinity College, Cambridge



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Suae specialiter suus singulariter

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Preface

Like almost everything I have written, this book attempts to bridge the gulf between what, from the backgrounds of their exponents, may be described as ‘philosophical’ and ‘historical’ approaches to writing about medieval philosophy. I look at Abelard’s arguments and positions, and I ask what sense we can make of them and whether they cohere with one another. But I do so within an historical framework, which is intended to take account both of Abelard’s development as a thinker and the general presuppositions and aims of his work. Such a method runs the risk of producing a book that will interest no one. Whether I have avoided it, others must judge.

Indeed, there is just one aspect of this book where *I* insist on being the sole arbiter: the extent of my debts, in writing it, both to institutions and to individuals. I have for a long time had the good fortune to belong to Trinity College, Cambridge, which has provided stability and support for my work; and in Anne Barton, Eric Griffiths, Jeremy Maule and Adrian Poole I have had colleagues there who have shown extraordinary tolerance and warmth to someone with academic interests so very different to their own. I should not, however, have undertaken so ambitious a project were it not for my especial good luck in having been given a British Academy Research Readership for the academic years 1991–2 and 1992–3.

Nor do I think I could have completed my project without the help and advice of the many colleagues, who have discussed problems with me, provided material or read drafts of chapters or the whole book: Charles Burnett, Michael Clanchy (who also kindly showed me some of his forthcoming book on Abelard), Yukio Iwakuma, Edouard Jeuneau, Jean Jolivet, Max de Gaynesford, Arthur Gibson, Bodil Holst, Christopher Kirwan, Simo Knuuttila, Christopher Martin, Constant Mews, Richard Sorabji (and the members of the Warburg Institute seminar run by him and Charles Burnett), Padmush Thuraisingham, Alan Weir.

I owe a very special debt to Peter Dronke and David Luscombe for their encouragement, perceptive criticism and generous help from the earliest stages of my project onwards; and to Anthony Kenny and Neema Sofaer, who showed me, at a time when I thought my book was almost ready, that I still had *much* more work to do.

In William Davies I have had the best of editors. Laura Pieters Cordy has worked unstintingly, combining thoroughness, intelligence and kindness, to transform diskettes liable to give a computer indigestion into ones to delight a publisher. Jean Field smoothed the process of copy-editing with her combination of scrupulous care and intelligent tact.

An author's closest family usually looks to the end of the acknowledgements for its more than well-deserved commemoration; but mine, which deserves it yet more, must look elsewhere: Sheila to the dedication, and Maximus – guess!

Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Abelard's works, the logical textbooks of Aristotle and Porphyry and Boethius' commentaries on them are listed in the Note on the reference system on pages xvi–xx.

<i>Abélard en son temps</i>	J. Jolivet (ed.), <i>Abélard en son temps. Actes du 9^e centenaire de la naissance de Pierre Abélard (14–19 Mai 1979)</i> (Paris, 1981)
AHDLMA	<i>Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge</i>
<i>Akademieabhandlungen</i>	M. Grabmann, <i>Gesammelte Akademieabhandlungen</i> (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zurich, 1979)
AL	<i>Aristoteles Latinus</i>
Bautier	R.-H. Bautier, 'Paris au temps d'Abélard' in <i>Abélard en son temps</i> , pp. 21–77
BGPMA	Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Texte und Untersuchungen
Busse	Porphyry <i>Isagoge</i> , ed. A. Busse in <i>Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca</i> IV, 1 (1887)
CC [cm]	Corpus christianorum [continuatio mediaevalis]
<i>Checklist</i>	J. Barrow, C. Burnett, D. Luscombe, 'A checklist of the manuscripts containing the writings of Peter Abelard and Heloise and other works closely associated with Abelard and his school', <i>Revue d'histoire des textes</i> (1984–5), 14–15, 183–302
CIMAGL	<i>Cahiers de l'Institut du moyen-âge grec et latin</i>

xii	List of abbreviations
<i>Commentaries and glosses</i>	J. Marenbon, 'Medieval Latin commentaries and glosses on Aristotelian logical texts before c. 1150 AD' in C. Burnett (ed.), <i>Glosses and commentaries on Aristotelian logical texts</i> (Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 23) (London, 1993), pp. 77–127
<i>Cousin I, II</i>	V. Cousin (ed., with the assistance of C. Jourdain and E. Dupois), <i>Petri Abaelardi opera hactenus seorsim edita I</i> (Paris, 1849); V. Cousin (ed., with assistance of C. Jourdain), <i>Petri Abaelardi opera hactenus seorsim edita II</i> (Paris, 1859)
CSEL <i>D'Amboise/Duchesne</i>	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum F. d'Amboise, <i>Petri Abaelardi Philosophi et Theologi, abbatis Ruyensis, et Heloisae conjugis ejus, Primae paraclensis abbatissae opera</i> (Paris, 1616) (see appendix, n. 11)
<i>Dict.HGE</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique</i>
<i>Lottin</i>	O. Lottin, <i>Psychologie et morale au XIIe et XIIIe siècles V</i> (Gembloux, 1959)
<i>Mews</i>	Introductions by C. Mews in <i>Op. Th.</i> III, pp. 15–81, 203–308
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MPL	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologia latina</i>
MS	<i>Mediaeval Studies</i>
<i>Op. Th.</i> I–III	E. Buytaert (I, II), E. Buytaert and C. Mews (III) (eds.), <i>Petri Abaelardi opera theologica</i> (Turnhout, 1969/1987) (CC [cm] 11–13)
<i>Ouvrages inédits</i>	V. Cousin (ed.), <i>Ouvrages inédits d'Abélard, pour servir à l'histoire de la philosophie scolastique en France</i> (Paris, 1836)
<i>Peter Abelard</i>	E. Buytaert, <i>Peter Abelard: proceedings of the international conference, Louvain, May 10–12, 1971</i> (Louvain/The Hague, 1974) (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, ser. I, studia II)
<i>Petrus Abaelardus</i>	R. Thomas (ed.), <i>Petrus Abaelardus (1079–1142): Person, Werk und Wirkung</i> (Trier, 1980) (Trier theologische Studien 38)

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List of abbreviations

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<i>Phil. Schr.</i>	B. Geyer (ed.), <i>Peter Abaelards philosophische Schriften</i> (Münster, 1919–31) (BGPMA 21)
<i>Pierre Abélard</i>	<i>Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable</i> (Paris, 1975) (Colloques internationaux du Centre national de la recherche scientifique 546)
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
<i>RTAM</i>	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</i>
<i>Scritti</i>	M. dal Pra (ed.), <i>Pietro Abelardo. Scritti di logica</i> (2nd edn, Florence, 1969)

Note on the reference system

In the case of most works cited, details are given in the footnotes. Full details are given at the first mention, authors' names and shortened titles only at subsequent mentions. All primary sources, and all secondary works mentioned twice or more, are also listed in the bibliography. For the works of Abelard himself, the logical textbooks of Aristotle and Porphyry, and Boethius' commentaries on them, details are usually given in brackets within the text, using as necessary the abbreviations explained below.

In my quotations, I follow the reading and orthography of the edition cited, except that: (1) I adjust editorial punctuation where necessary to bring out the meaning of the passage; (2) where I give a reference to a manuscript as well as a printed source, I follow the manuscript reading; (3) in citations from the *Sententie Abaelardi* I follow the (as yet unpublished) Luscombe edition.

THE WORKS OF ABELARD

The following list includes all Abelard's known surviving works and direct reports of his teaching, and cites the best edition of each. (Questions of authenticity are discussed in chapters 2 and 3 below.) References in the text and notes are to the pages and lines of the editions listed and use, where necessary, the abbreviations given in the left-hand column.

<i>Apologia</i>	Ed. in <i>Op. Th.</i> 1, pp. 359–68
<i>Carmen</i>	<i>Carmen ad Astralabium</i> : J. Rubingh-Boscher (ed.), <i>Peter Abelard. Carmen ad Astralabium. A critical edition</i> (Groningen, 1987)
<i>Carmen figuratum</i>	E. Ernst, 'Ein unbeachtetes "Carmen figuratum" des Petrus Abaelardus', <i>Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch</i> 21 (1986), 125–46

- Cat.frag.* Fragment of commentary on *Categories*: in *Scritti Collationes*: R. Thomas (ed.), *Petrus Abaelardus. Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum et Christianum* (Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, 1970)
- Comm.Rom.* Commentary on Romans: in *Op. Th.* I
- Comm.Cant.* Commentary on the Pauline Epistles by an anonymous pupil of Abelard, with material reported from Abelard's lectures: ed. A. Landgraf, *Commentarius cantabrigiensis* (Notre Dame, 1937–45)
- Conf. fid. Hel.* *Confessio fidei ad Heloissam*: ed. in C. Burnett, "Confessio fidei ad Heloissam" – Abelard's last letter to Heloise? A discussion and critical edition of the Latin and medieval French versions' *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 21 (1986), 147–55
- Conf. fid. 'Universis'* *Confessio fidei 'Universis'*: ed. in C. Burnett, 'Peter Abelard: a critical edition of Abelard's reply to accusations of heresy', *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986) 111–38
- De int.* *De intellectibus*: ed. in L. Urbani Ulivi, *La psicologia di Abelardo e il "Tractatus de intellectibus"* (Rome, 1976)
- Dial.* *Dialectica*: L. de Rijk (ed.), *Petrus Abaelardus. Dialectica* (2nd edn, Assen, 1970)
- ed.Por./ed.Per./ed.Div.* Literal glosses on the *Isagoge*, *De interpretatione* and *De divisione*: in *Scritti*
- Ep. 2–14 etc.* Letters 2–14: 2–5, and 6–7, ed. J. Muckle, *MS* 15 (1953), 47–94 and 17 (1955), 240–81; 8, ed. T. McLaughlin, *MS* 18 (1956), 241–92; 9–14, E. Smits (ed.), *Peter Abelard. Letters IX–XIV* (Groningen, 1983). The Letter to his *socii* (unnumbered) is ed. in R. Klibansky, 'Peter Abailard and Bernard of Clairvaux', *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 5 (1961), 1–27 at pp. 6–7 (see also chapter 3, n. 62).
- Exp. Hex.* Commentary on the Hexameron: in *MPL* 178 (but quotes are taken, as indicated, from Avranches, Bib. mun., 135); references to the final section, missing in this edition, are to E.

xvi	Note on the reference system
	Buytaert, 'Abelard's <i>Expositio in Hexaameron</i> ', <i>Antonianum</i> 43 (1968), 163–94; they are prefixed by 'Buy.'
<i>Exp. Or. Dom./Symb. Ap./Symb. Ath.</i>	C. Burnett (ed.), 'The <i>Expositio Orationis Dominicæ</i> "Multorum legimus orationes": Abelard's exposition of the Lord's Prayer', <i>RB</i> 95 (1985), 60–72; <i>Expositio Symboli Apostolorum</i> and <i>Expositio Symboli S. Athanasii</i> : in <i>MPL</i> 178
<i>Glossulae</i>	Commentary on <i>Isagoge</i> (incip. 'Nostrorum petitioni sociorum'): in <i>Phil. Schr.</i>
<i>Gl.sec.voc.</i>	<i>Glossae secundum vocales</i> (on the <i>Isagoge</i>): C. Ottaviano (ed.), in <i>Fontes Ambrosiani III</i> (Florence, 1933)
<i>HC</i>	<i>Historia Calamitatum</i> : J. Monfrin (ed.), <i>Pierre Abélard. Historia calamitatum</i> , (4th edn, Paris, 1979)
<i>Hymn.Par.</i>	<i>Hymnarius Paraclitensis: Hymn collections from the Paraclete</i> (Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, Kentucky, 1989) (Cistercian liturgy series 8–9)
<i>Planctus</i>	1, 4 and 6 in P. Dronke, <i>Poetic individuality in the Middle Ages</i> (Oxford, 1970) at pp. 148, 119–23, 203–9; 3 in W. von den Steinen, 'Die Planctus Abaelards – Jephthas Tochter', <i>Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch</i> 4 (1967), 122–44, at pp. 142–4. For 2 and 5 the complete edition in W. Meyer, <i>Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur mittellateinischen Rythmik I</i> (Berlin, 1905), pp. 347–52, 366–74 must still be used
<i>Problemata</i>	<i>Problemata Heloissae</i> : in <i>MPL</i> 178 (but quotes are taken, as indicated, from Paris BN, lat. 14511)
<i>Reportatio</i>	Marginalia reporting Abelard's teaching in London, British Library, Cotton Faustina A X (unpublished)
<i>Sc.</i>	<i>Scito teipsum</i> : D. Luscombe (ed.), <i>Peter Abelard's 'Ethics'</i> (Oxford, 1971)
<i>Secundum Mag. Petrum</i>	<i>Secundum Magistrum Petrum sententie</i> : in L. Minio-Paluello (ed.), <i>Twelfth-century logic II: Abaelardiana inedita</i> (Rome, 1958)
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Sententie Abaelardi</i> : quoted (by his kind permission) from the unpublished edition of

	David Luscombe. References are to the paragraphs of this edition, and also (Bu.) to the edition by S. Buzzetti (ed.), <i>Sententie magistri Petri Abaelardi (Sententie Hermanni)</i> (Florence, 1983)
<i>Sent.Flor.</i>	<i>Sententie Florianenses</i> : ed. H. Ostlender in <i>Florilegium Patristicum</i> 19 (Bonn, 1929)
<i>Sent.Par.</i>	<i>Sententie Parisienses</i> : in A. Landgraf (ed.), <i>Ecrits théologiques de l'école d'Abélard</i> (Louvain, 1934)
<i>Sententie Magistri Petri</i>	Ed. in Mews, 'Sententie', pp. 177–83
<i>Serm.</i> 1–33, etc.	Sermons 1–33: in <i>MPL</i> 178; and see chapter 3, n. 80, for supplementary material
<i>SN</i>	<i>Sic et non</i> : B. Boyer and R. McKeon (eds.), <i>Peter Abailard. Sic et non</i> (Chicago/London, 1976–7); q. 117 in J. Barrow, 'Tractatus Magistri Petri Abaelardi de Sacramento Altaris', <i>Traditio</i> 40 (1984), 328–36
<i>Soliloquium</i>	C. Burnett, 'Peter Abelard "Soliloquium". A critical edition', <i>Studi Medievali</i> 25, 2 (1984) 857–94
<i>sup.Por./sup.Pred./sup.Per.</i>	Commentaries from the <i>Logica</i> on the <i>Isagoge</i> , <i>Categories</i> and <i>De interpretatione</i> : in <i>Phil.Schr.</i> , the authentic last section of <i>sup.Per.</i> is ed. in Minio-Paluello <i>Abaelardiana inedita (sup.Per. (M))</i>
<i>sup.Top.</i>	Commentary on <i>De differentiis topicis</i> from the <i>Logica</i> : in <i>Scritti</i>
<i>TChr</i>	<i>Theologia Christiana</i> : in <i>Op. Th.</i> II
<i>tsch</i>	Early drafts of <i>Theologia Scholarium</i> : in <i>Op. Th.</i> II
<i>TSch</i>	<i>Theologia Scholarium</i> : in <i>Op. Th.</i> III
<i>TSum</i>	<i>Theologia Summi Boni</i> : in <i>Op. Th.</i> III

THE WORKS OF ARISTOTLE AND PORPHYRY

References are given in brackets within the text, first to the standard numbering of Aristotle's works (based on Becker's edition) or, for the *Isagoge*, to the pages and lines of *Busse*, then to the pages and lines of the edition of the Latin text used by Abelard in *AL* (L. Minio-Paluello (ed.), *AL* I, 1–

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5, *Categoriae vel Praedicamenta* (Bruges/Paris, 1961); L. Minio-Paluello (ed.), *AL* II, 1–2, *De interpretatione vel Periermenias* (Bruges/Paris, 1965); L. Minio-Paluello (ed.), *AL* I, 6–7, *Categoriarum supplementa* (Bruges/Paris, 1966).

THE LOGICAL WORKS OF BOETHIUS

References are given in brackets within the text to *MPL* 64, except for the commentaries on the *Isagoge* (*1inIs.*, *2inIs.*) where the references are to the edition by S. Brandt (Vienna/Leipzig, 1906) (CSEL 48) and those on *De interpretatione* (*1inDeIn.*, *2inDeIn.*) where the references are to the edition by C. Meiser, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1877, 1880).

ANONYMOUS TWELFTH-CENTURY (AND EARLIER) COMMENTARIES ON ARISTOTELIAN LOGIC

These are referred to according to the numbers of the Catalogue in *Commentaries and glosses* (e.g. P14, C16).

Bibliographical note for the paperback edition

Aside from the present note and the correction of some typographical errors, this paperback edition is an unaltered reprint of the hardback edition, published two years ago. My purpose here is to draw readers' attention to two important books – one published, one about to appear – which alter our understanding of Abelard. They are both concerned mainly with Abelard as a person, and his relations with Heloise, rather than with his philosophy or theology, and so they have close links with Part I, rather than Parts II or III, of my book.

The originality and importance of Michael Clanchy's *Abelard. A Medieval Life* (Oxford/Malden, Mass., 1997) does not lie in any additions or alterations to the chronology and external details of Abelard's life, as reconstructed by modern scholars and presented below in Chapter 1. Clanchy's achievement consists, rather, in putting flesh on these bare bones and presenting a credible and vivid picture of Abelard's personality, aims and decisions. Clanchy also looks at Abelard's relationship with Heloise in a way which links interestingly with the discussion below (especially Excursus 2 and Chapter 14). There I (following on ideas proposed by Peter Dronke) question the old assumption that any intellectual influence must have been *from* Abelard *to* Heloise. Why not vice versa? Clanchy goes far further in the range and importance of what he believes Abelard learned from Heloise. He makes a convincing case that Heloise was not a teenager when she first met Abelard, but a lady in her twenties, far better read in the ancient classics than Abelard himself, who had specialized in logic. From her, Clanchy claims, Abelard learned to admire the wisdom and virtuous lives of the pagan philosophers, and later, when she was an abbess and Abelard a monk, Heloise's letters transformed him from a rather conventional anti-feminist to one of the outstanding medieval exponents of the abilities and achievements of women. Both these ideas are plausible, although the argument for the first is somewhat speculative because it depends on taking Abelard's

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account in the *Historia Calamitatum* of what Heloise said fifteen years earlier as substantially accurate.

Clanchy does not contribute to the debate as such on the authorship of the love letters (see below, Excursus 1): he believes that other recent scholars have made an overwhelming case for their authenticity. But his analysis of the letters does help, indirectly, to bear out the view that they are authentic, by showing better than ever before, and without a trace of anachronism, how they are psychologically plausible. Constant Mews's *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (New York, forthcoming, probably in 1999) also contributes to the question of Abelard and Heloise's letters in an unusual way. Mews argues that a late-medieval manuscript records long excerpts from a correspondence exchanged by Abelard and Heloise at the time they were lovers. Although the modern editor of these letters raised the possibility that they might be Abelard's and Heloise's, the idea was not taken seriously. Mews now supports it with detailed stylistic and contextual arguments. He also examines the contrasting attitudes towards love held by the two parties, as well as looking at the wider phenomenon of male–female exchanges in the early twelfth century. Not until scholars have had the chance to consider Mews's detailed evidence and arguments will it become clear whether these new love letters will be generally accepted as authentic. Whatever the verdict, Mews's book – both by its presentation of the new letters, and through its wider treatment of twelfth-century women – will certainly help to shape discussions about Abelard and Heloise in the coming years.

John Marenbon
January 1999