

**ABÉLARD PIERRE (Abaelardus Petrus, Abailard Petrus)** — philosopher and theologian, born 1079 in the village of La Pallet near Nantes, died in 1142 in the Abbey of Cluny.

He came from a family of the knightly class. Around 1095 he came to Chartres where he studied mathematics with Theodoric of Chartres, but this caused him great difficulties. In Locmenach near Vannes from 1095 to 1099 he attended lectures in dialectic by the great logician Roscelin de Compiègne. Around 1100 he moved to Paris where dialectic then was flourishing and attended the lectures of William of Champeaux, with whom he twice broke contact because of differences in their views. He also studied theology with Anselm of Laon. Around 1104 he founded his own school in Melun, then moved to Corbeil which was closer to Paris. There he engaged in polemics with William. Abelard sought inspiration and materials for his work with various masters. In 1113 he took the chair of director at the cathedral school of Notre Dame. He had many students, one of whom would later become Pope Celestine II. He wrote in one of his letters: "I do not want to be a philosopher if it (philosophy) shall lead me to reject St. Paul; I do not want to be Aristotle if this might lead me away from Christ" (Letter XIV).

The milestone in Abelard's life was his love for Heloise. This tragic romance was the reason for Abelard entering the Abbey of St. Denis. Helen also took religious vows in the cloister of Argentueil. In 1121, Abelard was declared a heretic by the judgment of the synod in Soissons and condemned. His first theological treatise (on the Holy Trinity, *Tractatus de unitate et trinitate divina*) was consigned to flames. He was sentenced to confinement in the cloister of St. Médard. He fled in secret and around 1123 he founded his own cloister under the title "The Paraclete" (The Holy Spirit) in the wasteland of Quincey. Abelard also spent time in the cloister in Saint Gildas of Rhuy. In 1141, at the insistence of Bernard of Clairvaux, a synod was called in Sens and the errors of Abelard's doctrine were again condemned.

Abelard presented his philosophical views in *Dialectica* (critical edition, L. M. Rijk, As 1956), *Introductiones parvulorum; Logica "ingredientibus"* (Glosses to Porphyry, to Aristotle's *Categories* and *Peri Hermeneias*, Mr 1933); *Ethica seu Scito te ipsum* (PL 18, 633-678); *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum* (PL 178, 1611-1684). Abelard also wrote religious hymns: *O quanta qualia* (*O great and glorious are the Lord's days*). His biographical letters are also known, *Historia calamitatum* (*The history of my calamities*), which are the only autobiographical notes of Abelard that remain to this day. Abelard dealt with theological questions in such works as *Tractatus de unitate et trinitate divina* (1121), *Sic et non* (1121-1122), *Theologia christiana* (1123), *Introductio ad theologiam*, *Epitome theologiae christianae*, *Expositio in Hexaëmeron*, and *Commentarium super sancti Pauli Epistolam ad Romanos libri quinque*. *Pisma wybrane* (Selected Works) have been published in a Polish translation (I-III, Wwa 1968-1970).

Abelard was chiefly interested in logical problems, especially the question of universals. He addressed the questions of Porphyry. The first was: do universals exist in reality, or only in the mind?. The next was: Supposing that they exist in reality, are the universals of a corporeal nature, or an incorporeal nature, and in what way are they connected with things that can be known by the senses? Abelard asked about the foundations upon which we give things common names. In the discussion that was then developing, some philosophers took the position that the universals are things (radical conceptual realism - Roscelin and William of Champeaux), while others denied the existence of such objects and regard species only as expressions (nominalism). The leading idea in the thoughts of 12th century philosophers was how to work out a compromise in the controversy about universals.

In the controversy over the value of universals, the point of dispute was the meaning of intellectual cognitive apprehensions and to what extent general names are in agreement with reality. Human speech uses conventional signs to express general contents. The acceptance of the existence of individual objects is not tantamount to the negation of universals. In this controversy, Abelard's

position was close to nominalism. His position is called sermonism. Abelard distinguished the sound (*vox*) from the meaning of a word (*sermo*), which he connected with universals. With regard to human knowledge, only words correspond to universals, but not words as physical signs or as designates, but as the meaning of words. The word as *vox* expresses a general and abstract concept, and if it is understood in this way, it constitutes a name (*nomen*) or a speech (*sermo*), while in its content it expresses a reality that is thought of. A name performs a logical function. It can be predicated of many concrete things. Abelard held that things cannot be general, that only individual concrete things exist. The concepts of things arise as a result of abstraction. In turn, abstraction is based upon things. The individuals of a given species always possess a common form that provides the basis for giving them a common name.

From the Abelard's methods of resolving the problem of the universals, where the concrete is primary and the universal is secondary, he concluded that sense cognition is precise, real and provides certain knowledge, while universal cognition is opinion. This interpretation was the foundation for the development of logic among the thinkers of the thirteenth century. They took their logical terminology from Abelard and thereby also the foundation for the further development of logic.

In his work *Sic et non*, Abelard presented passages from the Bible and the Church Fathers that contradicted each other. He showed that the texts of these authorities stood in need of interpretation and could not be treated literally. Thereby he initiated a new theological method. He showed that the introduction of dialectic into theology made it easier to accept the mysteries of faith and helped to resist attacks against theology from philosophers and heretics. He used his dialectical method and new kinds of metaphor and analogy to explain particular truths of the faith, but in the process he was not able to avoid errors.

The ethics that Abelard presented in his work *Scito te ipsum* was speculative in character, and the theological arguments in it are merely appended to it. The task of ethics is to show man the highest good as the end of aspirations, and the highest good is God. The good is the harmony of our action with God's will. The highest good may be achieved by virtue. Action in itself is morally neutral. The important question is the person's intention or conviction. Abelard regarded the conscience as the norm of human acts. The value of an act results from a person's intention, that is, from the agreement of his conduct with his conscience. Acting well is acting in agreement with the intention of respecting God's will. Intentions are manifested in the internal act of consent to some appetite or desire. Inclinations of themselves are neither good nor evil. Sin is an act of consent to something that is "unbecoming". An action has the same moral value as the intention behind it. In response to the question of what is a good intention, Abelard responds that it is not enough to believe that what one does is pleasing to God, but it must be in objective agreement with God's will.

Abelard was one of the outstanding minds of the Middle Ages. His work provided the occasion for many discussions in both philosophy and theology. He left works that have had a lasting influence upon the development of human thought.

É. Gilson, *Héloïse et Abelard*, P 1938 (*Heloisa i Abelard, Średnowieczne początki humanizmu* [Heloise and Abelard, the Mediaeval beginnings of humanism] Wwa 1956); Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 153-163, Lo 1955; W. Poplatek, *Poglądy etyczne Piotra Abelarda w zestawieniu z etyką sytuacyjną* [Ethical views of Peter Abelard in comparison with situation ethics], RTK 7 (1960) z. 4, 91-102; J. Jolivet, *Abelard et la philosophie*, RHR 164 (1963), 181-189; W. Michalowski, *Pojęcie zdania logicznego u Piotra Abelarda* [The concept of the logical proposition in Peter Abelard], RuF 22 (1964), 218-220; R. Palacz, *Abelard*, Wwa 1966; R. Thomas, *Der philosophisch-theologische Erkenntnisweg Peter Abelards im Dialogus unter Philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*, Bo 1966; L. Grane, *Peter Abelard, Philosophie und Christentum im Mittelalter*, Gö 1969; H. J. Störig, *Kleine Weltgeschichte der Philosophie*, F 1992, pp. 234-242; L. Joachimowicz, *Wstęp* [Introduction], in: Peter Abelard, *Historia moich niedoli i inne listy* [History of my calamities and other letters], Wwa 1993, 5-20.

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