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Chris Schabel

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**Redating Pierre d'Ailly's Early Writings and Revisiting His Position
on the Necessity of the Past and the Future**

Chris Schabel

Pierre d'Ailly concludes his questions on Boethius' *De consolazione Philosophiae* with a brief doubt on whether the past is able not to have been. Following the Augustinian Gregory of Rimini, Pierre lists names associated with the positive and negative responses, rightly remarks that Gregory left the issue undetermined, adds that the "Catholic doctors" appear to deny this possibility, and then posits two conclusions: "The first," Pierre says, "is that no past thing is able not to have been, and this I posit because it is commonly granted. The second conclusion, which I posit, is this: that it would be just as easy to maintain that some past thing is able not to have been as it would be to maintain that some future thing is able not to come about"¹. These conclusions succinctly encapsulate the difficulty of the conundrum for Pierre and its fascination for us.

Pierre d'Ailly's position on the modal status of the past and future deserves our renewed attention. Although Pierre's main discussion, in his questions on the *Sentences*, survives in only four manuscripts, many fewer than listed in Stegmüller's *Repertorium*², Pierre's views on divine foreknowledge were known to Peter de Rivo and his opponents in the quarrel over future contingents at the University of Louvain, which raged between 1465 and 1474, even before the *editio princeps* of Pierre's work was printed in

¹ Petrus de Alliaco, *In Boethii De consolazione Philosophiae*, q. 2, ed. Chris Schabel, forthcoming: "Utrum cum aeterna et immutabili Dei praescientia omnium futurorum stet aliquid simpliciter contingenter evenire"; a. 5, punct. 2, dub.: "Nunc est dubitatio utrum possit sustineri quod illud quod fuit potest non fuisse... Et ideo pono duas conclusiones ad istud dubium responsivas. Prima est quod nullum praeteritum potest non fuisse, et istam pono quia conceditur communiter. Secunda conclusio, quam ego pono, est haec: quod ita faciliter sustineretur quod aliquod praeteritum potest non fuisse sicut sustineretur quod aliquod futurum potest non fore."

² Monica Calma, «Pierre d'Ailly: Le commentaire sur les *Sentences* de Pierre Lombard», *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 49, 2007, p. 139-194; Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium commentariorum in Sententias Petri Lombardi*, 2 vols., Würzburg, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1947, I, p. 306-309.

1481 in nearby Brussels³. Within 35 years Pierre's *Sentences* had been printed five times, making his work an early modern classic. True, Pierre is known as a borrower, such that on the present topic Pierre's treatment in his *Sentences* is often a compilation of passages copied or paraphrased from Gregory of Rimini's text⁴. Still, recently scholars have argued that, in borrowing words and ideas, such authors as Pierre combined, arranged, and shaped them to create something original⁵. Finally, while previous scholarship on this issue has usually looked at Pierre in isolation from his nearest predecessors and contemporaries active from the Black Death to the Great Schism, recent work on pertinent writings allows us to put Pierre's theories in their proper context.

This contextualization is important, for on topics ranging from political thought to astrology many historians have touched on Pierre d'Ailly's position on divine knowledge, power, and will, yet such prominent studies as Francis Oakley's *The Political Thought of Pierre d'Ailly* and Laura Smoller's *History, Prophecy, and the Stars* make no mention of Gregory of Rimini at all, even when crucial notions such as Pierre's definition of God's *potentia absoluta* and *ordinata* are taken partly verbatim from Gregory – although, as Smoller and others have pointed out, Oakley misunderstood Pierre's definition anyway⁶. More particularly, it has become a commonplace in the literature to claim that Pierre was among a small group of medieval thinkers who accepted that God has power over the past⁷, but the very existence of the group itself has been cast into doubt⁸.

³ Petrus de Rivo, *Questio quodlibetica disputata Lovanii per Petrum de Rivo, anno LXIX^o*, c. 1, ed. Chris Schabel, «Peter de Rivo and the Quarrel over Future Contingents at Louvain: New Evidence and New Perspectives (Part I)», *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 6, 1995, p. 363-473, at 417.7-11; [Guillelmus Boudinus], *Tractatus de veritatibus futurorum contingentium adversus Petrum de Rivo*, c. 6, ed. Léon Baudry, *La querelle des futurs contingents (Louvain 1465-1475)*, Paris, Vrin, 1950, p. 206; Henricus de Zoemeren, *Tractatus adversus sententiam Petri de Rivo de futuris contingentibus*, ed. Baudry, *La querelle*, p. 290.

⁴ See the correspondence table in Paul J.J.M. Bakker and Chris Schabel, «*Sentences* Commentaries of the Later Fourteenth Century», in *Mediaeval Commentaries on the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard*, vol. I, ed. Gillian R. Evans, Leiden, Brill, 2002, p. 425-464, at 442.

⁵ See, e.g., Monica Calma, «Plagium», in *Mots médiévaux offerts à Ruedi Imbach*, ed. Iñigo Atucha, Dragos Calma, Catherine König-Pralong, and Irene Zavattero, Porto, Brepols, 2011, p. 503-512.

⁶ Francis Oakley, *The Political Thought of Pierre d'Ailly: The Voluntarist Tradition*, New Haven, Yale UP, 1964; Laura Ackerman Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350-1420*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton UP, 1994, esp. p. 125.

⁷ See, e.g., Richard Gaskin, «Peter of Ailly and Other Fourteenth-Century Thinkers on Divine Power and the Necessity of the Past», *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 79, 1997, p. 273-291; Lodi Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense. Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*, Cambridge, MA,

I am now editing the second of Pierre d'Ailly's two questions on Boethius' *De consolacione* as well as the volume of Pierre's questions on the *Sentences* that consists of his treatment of divine knowledge, power, and will⁹. In light of this editing work, this paper revises the chronology of these writings and rejects the topos that Pierre asserted that God can change the past.

Redating Pierre d'Ailly's Questions on Boethius' *De consolacione Philosophiae*

Because Pierre d'Ailly dealt with the modal status of the past and the future in his questions on Boethius' *De consolacione Philosophiae* and on Lombard's *Sentences*, the relative chronology of these works must first be established. Ten manuscripts are now known to contain materials relating to Boethius' *De consolacione* that have been attributed to Pierre. Six witnesses preserve a gigantic question connected to books I-IV, with three of these six also having a long second question linked to book V; four other codices contain a *expositio* of Boethius' text; and all but one of the ten manuscripts have the same sermon or *principium* before the *quaestio(nes)* or *expositio* that they contain¹⁰:

Principium plus expositio:

Erfurt, CA F 8

Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek, 84

Halle, Stifts- und Gymnasialbibliothek, Qu. Cod. 208

Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, BPL 133

Q. I without principium:

Erfurt, CA F 9

Principium plus Q I:

Paris, BnF, lat. 14580

Vaticano, BAV, Palat. lat. 608, vol. II (abridged)

Harvard UP, 2009, p. 117; Stamatios Gerogiorgakis, *Futura contingentia, necessitas per accidens und Prädestination in Byzanz und in der Scholastik*, Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 2017, p. 111.

⁸ In my lecture «Y a-t-il eu des auteurs scolastiques ayant soutenu que Dieu pouvait défaire le passé?», Conférences Pierre Abélard 2016, Université Paris-Sorbonne, 12 May 2016, to be published in a book in the Vrin series.

⁹ Part of the series begun with *Petri de Alliaco Questiones super primum, tertium et quartum librum Sententiarum. I: Principia et questio circa Prologum*, ed. Monica Brinzei, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013.

¹⁰ Giessen, Halle, and Leiden were brought to my attention by Monica Brinzei and Lodi Nauta.

Principium plus *QQ. 1-2*:

Paris, Arsenal, 520

Paris, BnF, lat. 3122

Paris, BnF, lat. 14579

The current view is that Pierre authored the *principium* and the questions, but perhaps not the *expositio*, in the period 1377-1381, after Pierre's lectures on the *Sentences* and before he became Master of Theology. I argue instead that Pierre wrote all three components linked to *De consolatione*, that they originally belonged together, and that this work was completed before the middle of 1374 based on lectures delivered in 1370-71.

Pierre d'Ailly composed several works before he became Master of Theology in early 1381, almost of all which are available in print, sometimes in modern critical editions and even in English translations: treatises on *Concepts*, *Insolubles*, the *Soul*, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, and the *Sentences*¹¹. In the late nineteenth century, Paul Tschackert and Louis Salembier were of the opinion that Pierre's treatises *De anima* and on *De consolatione* were works of youth from around 1372, a view adopted later by Palémon Glorieux¹². In an authoritative article on the chronology of Pierre's philosophical writings published in 1986, however, the editors of Pierre's early philosophical works, Marguerite Chappuis, Ludger Kaczmarek, and Olaf Pluta, instead argued that *De anima* was written after Pierre's lectures on the *Sentences*, traditionally dated to 1376-77. At the end of the questions on *De consolatione*, Pierre cites explicitly his treatise *De anima*, while the *De consolatione* work was written before Pierre became Master of Theology. Thus Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta dated both *De anima* and

¹¹ See Petrus de Alliaco, *Modi significandi und ihre Destruktionen: zwei Texte zur scholastischen Sprachtheorie im 14. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ludger Kaczmarek, Münster, Münsteraner Arbeitskreis für Semiotik, 1980 (on *Concepts* and on *Insolubles*); *Concepts and Insolubles: An Annotated Translation*, trans. Paul Vincent Spade, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1980; *Tractatus de anima*, ed. Olaf Pluta, *Die philosophische Psychologie des Peter von Ailly*, Amsterdam, G.B. Grüner, 1987; *Tractatus super De consolatione philosophiae*, ed. Marguerite Chappuis, Amsterdam, G.B. Grüner, 1988 (only question 1); *Principia et questio circa Prologum*, ed. Brinzei.

¹² Paul Tschackert, *Peter von Ailly (Petrus de Alliaco.) Zur Geschichte des großen abendländischen Schisma und der Reformconcilien von Pisa und Constanz*, Gotha, Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1877, p. 348; Louis Salembier, *Petrus de Alliaco*, Lille, 1886, p. xiii; Palémon Glorieux, «L'œuvre littéraire de Pierre d'Ailly. Remarques et précisions», *Mélanges de science religieuse* 22.2, 1965, p. 61-78, at 66

the questions on *De consolatione* to between 1377 and 1381 and supported the sequence *Sentences*, *De anima*, and *De consolatione*¹³.

Given what we know about Pierre d'Ailly and the curriculum at Paris, this scenario is unlikely. On the basis of the records of the *principia* debates among Parisian bachelors of the *Sentences* from the 1370s, William Courtenay has convincingly redated Pierre's lectures on the *Sentences* to the academic year 1377-78 and not 1376-77, contrary to Glorieux and, following him, Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta¹⁴. Prior to these lectures, Pierre was already termed "bachelor of theology" on 1 June 1375, and we know that he read the Bible in 1374-75 (on the *Song of Songs*) and 1375-76 (on Mark), leaving one year of preparation for his *Sentences* lectures¹⁵. Pierre thus was *cursor biblicus* as of the fall of 1374, *baccalarius Sententiarum* in the fall of 1377, and *baccalarius formatus* in mid-1378, all in the Faculty of Theology. Afterwards, Pierre fulfilled the requirements for his future degree by delivering sermons and participating in debates, until he became Master of Theology in the spring of 1381. Once Pierre had begun lecturing on the *Sentences* in late 1377, there would have been no reason to state, as he does five times in his questions on *De consolatione*, something along the following lines¹⁶: "I shall say nothing on this philosophical inquisition in this question, because I do not want, nor am I allowed, to enter secretly the confines of a higher faculty." True, as Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta point out, this is an indication that Pierre was not yet Master of Theology¹⁷, but it is also evidence that he was not yet even a bachelor of the *Sentences*, since in 1377-78 he was permitted to address any theological issue that he wished.

¹³ Marguerite Chappuis, Ludger Kaczmarek, and Olaf Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften des Peter von Ailly: Authentizität und Chronologie», *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 33, 1986, p. 593-615; Pluta, *Die philosophische Psychologie*, p. ii-iv; Chappuis, *Tractatus*, p. viii-ix.

¹⁴ William J. Courtenay, «Theological Bachelors at Paris on the Eve of the Papal Schism. The Academic Environment of Peter of Candia», in *Philosophy and theology in the Long Middle Ages: A Tribute to Stephen F. Brown*, ed. Kent Emery, Jr., Russell L. Friedman, Andreas Speer, and Maxime Mauriège, Leiden, Brill 2011, p. 921-952, at 942-943.

¹⁵ Palémon Glorieux, «Les années d'études de Pierre d'Ailly», *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 44, 1977, p. 127-149.

¹⁶ Petrus de Alliaco, *Tractatus super De consolatione philosophiae*, q. 1, a. 1, ed. Chappuis, p. 18* §2: "Sed de hac inquisitione philosophica in ista quaestione nihil dicam, quia nolo, nec mihi licet, facultatis altioris limites subintrare." Cf. p. 35* §3: "Et si mihi liceat altioris facultatis limites subintrare..."; p. 38* §10: "Et quamquam ista materia theologica videatur, non tamen loquendo de eo intendo altioris facultatis limites subintrare nec in messem alienam mittere falcem..."; a. 7, p. 168* §3: "Si autem mihi liceret altioris facultatis limites subintrare..."; the end of q. 2 (see n. 18 below). See also Chappuis' study after the edition of the *Tractatus*, p. 158-159.

¹⁷ Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften», p. 603.

The evidence that Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta put forward for the relative dating of the works in question may actually point in the opposite direction. While the *De anima* treatise cites explicitly the treatise on *Insolubilia*, and the treatise on *De consolatione* in turn cites explicitly *De anima*, there are no explicit citations of the questions on the *Sentences* in any of these works. The wider context of the *De consolatione* reference to *De anima* is instructive: “With respect to the last article, I treated this especially in the little book that I composed on the *Soul*, in chapters 7 and 13. But we must ask for a more perfect determination of all the above from the theological doctors.” Thus ends the entire treatise, but immediately before this passage Pierre writes as follows:

With respect to the third point of this article, it must be seen concerning what was asked, namely ‘Whether along with [God’s] eternal and immutable [foreknowledge of all futures it stands that anything comes about contingently without qualification]’. The response to this is clear from Boethius’ determination in this fifth book and from what was said above about the text. I arrived at the end of this *lectura* before I was able to deal with this article more fully¹⁸.

Besides the fact that Pierre explicitly ties this text to a lecture series on Boethius’ *De consolatione*, which he is unlikely to have delivered as a bachelor *formatus* in theology, it is striking that he does not cite his question 11 on the *Sentences*, in which he spends about 50 modern pages determining precisely this, the compatibility of divine knowledge and contingency¹⁹. Since just afterwards in the *De consolatione* treatise Pierre excused himself by remarking that he had already dealt with an issue in his *De anima* treatise, he would certainly have also cited his questions on the *Sentences* had they existed, rather than simply state that he had run out of time.

¹⁸ Pierre d’Ailly, *In Boethii De consolatione Philosophiae*, q. 2, a. 5, punct. 3, et a. 6, ed. Schabel: “Quantum ad tertium punctum huius articuli, videndum est de quaesito, scilicet utrum cum aeterna et immutabili etc. <Dei praescientia omnium futurorum stet aliquid simpliciter contingenter evenire>. Ad quod patet responsio ex determinatione Boethii in hoc quinto libro et ex praedictis supra textum. Ad cuius lecturae finem perveni antequam possem hunc articulum diffusius pertractare etc. Quantum autem ad ultimum articulum specialiter tractavi in libello quem composui *De anima*, in septimo et decimotertio capitulis. Perfectiorem autem determinationem omnium praemissorum a doctoribus theologis exquirere debemus.”

¹⁹ Petrus de Alliaco, *Quaestiones in libros Sententiarum* I (henceforth: *I Sent.*), q. 11, ed. Chris Schabel, forthcoming: “Utrum cum Dei omniscientia stet rei contingentia.”

Nevertheless, Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta claim that in two cases in *De anima* Pierre alludes to his questions on the *Sentences*²⁰. First, in ch. 11, part 6 of *De anima*, speaking of intuitive and abstractive cognition, Pierre remarks that, “although there are various ways of speaking of the difference between these cognitions, as I have touched on elsewhere, nevertheless it can probably be said that...”²¹. As Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta remark, this topic is indeed discussed in Pierre’s work on the *Sentences*, q. 3, a. 1, but there Pierre did not simply ‘touch on’ (*tetigi*) the difference, but he discussed it at length, and if he meant his questions on the *Sentences* we would expect the word *tractavi* instead, the verb that Pierre uses when referring back to *De anima* in his questions on *De consolatione*. The verb *tetigi* may rather reference what he said earlier in *De anima* itself, where in ch. 9, parts 3-4, and ch. 10, parts 1-3, he borrows from William of Ockham’s and Gregory of Rimini’s discussions in their questions on *I Sentences* concerning intuitive and abstractive cognition, in fact merely ‘touching on’ the various opinions on this issue²². In the second example, Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta simply remark that *De anima*, ch. 12, part 6, takes up the same theme covered in the abovementioned article in Pierre’s *Sentences* questions, without showing that the one discussion relies on the other, although in both cases Pierre apparently copies from Rimini²³.

Finally, Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta consider the vague and atemporal reference in Pierre’s IV *Sentences*, q. 5, a. 3, “Sed de hoc alibi,” concerning the opinions of Scotus and Ockham on the sensitive and intellective souls in man, to indicate the brief treatment in *De anima*, ch. 1, part 5, q. 2, which was for them still to be written²⁴. In this case, however, one would ordinarily expect a *sententiarius* to be referring to his own questions on book II. Pierre’s book II has not come down to us, but Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta point to a reference to what “debet videri super secundo libro” in the first question of book IV, indicating that Pierre read the four books in the sequence

²⁰ Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften», p. 599.

²¹ Petrus de Alliaco, *Tractatus de anima*, c. 11, pars 6, ed. Pluta, p. 70: “Secundum praedicta ulterius concludamus quod de rebus sensibilibus habere possumus notitiam sensualem simplicem tam intuitivam quam abstractivam. Nam, licet de differentia harum notitiarum sint diversi modi dicendi, ut alibi tetigi, tamen probabiliter potest dici quod...”

²² Petrus de Alliaco, *Tractatus de anima*, c. 9, partes 3-4 et c. 10, partes 1-3, ed. Pluta, p. 55-60.

²³ Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften», p. 599; Petrus de Alliaco, *Tractatus de anima*, c. 12, pars 6, ed. Pluta, p. 80, n. 25.

²⁴ Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften», p. 599; Petrus de Alliaco, *Tractatus de anima*, c. 1, pars 5, q. 2, ed. Pluta, p. 9-10.

I-IV-II-III²⁵. It is more likely, then, that the “Sed de hoc alibi” in question 5 of book IV is another reference to the upcoming lectures on book II rather than to a planned future treatise *De anima*. Perhaps Pierre did not compose a written version of book II because he was content with what he had written earlier in *De anima*.

So when did Pierre d’Ailly deliver the sermon and lectures that served as the basis for his so-called ‘treatise’ on Boethius’ *De consolazione*? Pierre was probably born between late 1349 and mid-1350, to judge from his claim that he was born around five years after a conjunction that occurred in March 1345²⁶. In January 1371 Pierre was a Master of Arts in his third year of theological studies, meaning that he had begun in the fall of 1368. The latest he could have incepted in arts was the spring of 1370. Ordinarily one would have had to have been in one’s twenty-first year to become Master of Arts, and this was in fact the case in early 1370. The statutes required that one reign in Arts for a time and hear lectures in theology for six years before teaching in the Faculty of Theology, and this seems to be precisely what Pierre did (1368-74). The statutes also required six years starting from the Bible reading before becoming Master of Theology, and this is also exactly what Pierre did (1374-80), since promotions to master occurred in jubilee years, which was true of 1381, but not of 1380²⁷.

Thus Pierre d’Ailly most likely began his theological studies in 1368 while still a Bachelor of Arts, which was not against the statutes, *pace* Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, who employed 1368 as the date when he became Master of Arts²⁸. Still, in 1368 Pierre was capable of teaching logic and authoring small related treatises such as his *Concepts* and *Insolubles*. Unlike the questions on *De consolazione*, Pierre’s *De anima* does not contain the terms *lectura* or *lectiones*, so there is no indication that it is the product of teaching. Since Pierre had been hearing lectures on Aristotle’s *De anima* and other advanced books in philosophy at least since 1368, Pierre’s own *De anima*, which occupies just 107 pages in the critical edition, could have been a written work composed for his licensing in Arts. He probably then became Master of Arts in the first half of 1370 and reigned in Arts for some years afterwards. Pierre had ample time and

²⁵ Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften», p. 603-604 and n. 58.

²⁶ In personal correspondence, Philipp Nothaft has confirmed the reference.

²⁷ *Rotuli Parisienses. Supplications to the Pope from the University of Paris. Volume II: 1352-1378*, ed. William J. Courtenay and Eric Goddard, Leiden, Brill, 2004, p. 379; Glorieux, «Les années d’études», p. 129-130; Courtenay, «Theological Bachelors at Paris», esp. p. 943.

²⁸ Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Pluta, «Die philosophischen Schriften», p. 606.

opportunity to compose smallish writings on such matters as *Concepts*, *Insolubles*, the *Soul* by mid-1370 and the much larger set on the *Consolation of Philosophy* well before he began reading the Bible in the fall of 1374.

The sermon that precedes the questions on *De consolatione*, as well as the subject of the work itself, suggests that this was the product of the beginning of Pierre d'Ailly's reign as Master of Arts, probably the academic year 1370-71. As in the case of the principal sermons before Pierre's bachelor lectures on the *Song of Songs* and on the *Gospel of Mark* and before his first *principium* question stemming from a debate held just before his lectures on the *Sentences*²⁹ – and not in conjunction with his promotion to Master of Theology³⁰ – Pierre's sermon before his questions on *De consolatione* exists because such sermons were mandatory exercises and Pierre decided to include the text with the written versions of his lectures. Although nowhere near as numerous as surviving sermons from academic exercises in the Faculty of Theology, speeches in praise of philosophy or a particular work, specialists now agree, were also part of the curriculum in the Arts Faculty by the fourteenth century, in the outward form of sermons.

Siegfried Wenzel identified such a sermon in Worcester Cathedral F 10, which has a *thema*, not from the Bible, but from Aristotle's *De sompno et vigilia* II, ch. 2: "Purum diligenter monstrat"³¹. The sermon has an opening section asking for the audience's prayers, the *thema* is divided, three parts are discussed and concluded with the repetition of the *thema*, and then the sermon ends with a *unitio* wrapping things together with three authoritative quotations, in this instance from Boethius, Cicero, and Seneca. For Wenzel, this is a *principium* of a newly incepted Master of Arts. Although before Wenzel's discovery historians of the university knew that a new Master of Arts had to give a *principium*, after which he would teach a course on philosophy, because of the lack of specific evidence they thought it was a lecture on philosophy. In fact it was a sermon in praise of philosophy, just as principal sermons in theology were praises of

²⁹ For the sermon on Mark, see Palémon Glorieux, «Deux éloges de la sainte Ecriture par Pierre d'Ailly», *Mélanges de science religieuse* 29, 1972, p. 113-129, and Orthuinus Gratius, *Fasciculus rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum*, London 1690, part 2, p. 513-518; for the principal sermons on the *Sentences*, see *Principia et questio circa Prologum*, ed. Brinzei, p. 3-9, 45-52, 77-84, 102-108.

³⁰ Contrary to Alain Boureau's assertion in his review of the Brinzei edition in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 109, 2014, p. 1035-1038, at 1037.

³¹ Siegfried Wenzel, «A Sermon in Praise of Philosophy», *Traditio* 50, 1995, p. 249-259, edition on 255-259.

theology. Wenzel's example is most likely from fifteenth-century Oxford, but he was then able to identify others from Bologna and Cologne going back into the fourteenth century, and statutes speak of *principia* in Arts as early as the mid-thirteenth century. Because he assumed that new Masters of Arts had not yet begun studying theology, Wenzel concluded "that by the fourteenth century the scholastic sermon form had acquired the status of a rhetorical genre that could be used for occasions beyond the normal environment for preaching"³². Wenzel may be correct about the genre, but, as we have seen, Pierre d'Ailly and other new Masters of Arts were able to begin their theological studies before incepting in Arts.

Pierre d'Ailly's *principium*, identified as such by Chappuis³³, quite a bit longer than Wenzel's, parallels it in every way. It begins by addressing [p. 1* §1 in the edition] "Reverendissimi patres magistri ac domini carissimi...", which is repeated often [e.g., 2* §§4, 7; 3* §8; 4* §9; 11* §16], whereas the Worcester sermon begins with the briefer "Reverendi mei." Chappuis calls the opening section a *captatio benevolentiae*, which is what we find in the Worcester codex as well. Notably Pierre tells his listeners [2* §6]: "... linguam suam sicut calamum suum temperet et compositum sermonem tribuat ori meo." The sermon is clearly a praise of philosophy, but this is stated explicitly on at least two occasions. The first is just before Pierre announces the *thema* [3* §7]: "... aliqualem praemissurus *philosophiae recommendationem*. Talem recipio propositionem: 'Ad finem beatitudinis nititur pervenire' scribitur III huius, prosa 2" [cf. 9* §13]. The *thema* is thus taken from Boethius' *De consolatione* III, prose 2. Near the start of the first question, which begins with a reference to the *thema* [14* §1]: "Nunc vero, reverendi domini, iuxta sententiam thematis praeassumpti et materiam tactam in deductione eiusdem," Pierre repeats that this was the *thema* in his *recommendatio philosophiae* [15* §5]: "... sicut in recommendatione philosophiae superius fuit dictum, philosophia 'Ad finem beatitudinis nititur pervenire'." Like the author of the Worcester sermon, Pierre has a three-fold division of his sermon after dividing the *thema*, speaking of a [9* §14] "triplici quaestione" [10* §14]: "Huic triplici quaestioni sub triplici conclusione nostri thematis verba respondent, quod scilicet philosophia est..." Pierre gives the traditional diagrams dividing his long sermon, but he decides to cut it short,

³² Wenzel, «A Sermon in Praise of Philosophy», p. 254.

³³ Chappuis, «Deuxième Partie : étude critique», in *Tractatus*, p. 10-23.

omitting further divisions [10* §15]: “Omissis ergo aliis divisionibus causa brevitatis... vestris auribus...” The sermon concludes with a repetition of the *thema* [13* §19].

The genre and specific nature of the sermon are thus tied to Pierre d’Ailly’s inception as Master of Arts, which, as we have seen, occurred in the spring of 1370 at the latest. As James Weisheipl states, after the *principium* the new Master of Arts would then have the duty of lecturing on “universally accepted books,” in other words, “to lecture on any approved book,” and to determine disputed questions³⁴. Within his *principium*, Pierre announced that he would give lectures, a lecture series, on *De consolatione* in the Faculty of Arts [2* §5]: “... in huius libri *lectura* laborare decrevi,” mentioning just afterwards his choice of *De consolatione* [2* §7]: “Sed reverendissimi patres, antequam procedam ad *lecturam huius libri*...”; as well as the venue [11* §16]: “...in scola philosophiae...” At the start of the first question, the fact that it is a lecture series becomes even more clear: [16* §8]: “... in sequentibus *lectionibus legendo istum librum* intendo declarare”; [21* §3]: “... sicut in sequentibus *lectionibus* apparebit.” Finally, Pierre identifies himself, the person who is about to deliver the sermon [1* §2], as “iuvenem et indocutum... locuturum,” which would aptly describe a twenty-year old about to reign in Arts.

It would be unusual, however, for a *lectura* on a text not to explain the work, but rather to jump right into questions merely linked to the text. Chappuis knew the existence of an *expositio* of Boethius’ *De consolatione* in Erfurt CA F 8, introduced by the same *principium* as in the manuscripts containing questions, but she had her doubts about Pierre’s authorship of the *expositio* and advised that only a detailed study of the citations and content could decide the issue³⁵. If we consider that Pierre’s sermon and questions come from his magisterial lectures on Boethius, it should not be surprising for him to have authored an *expositio* as well, since he no doubt explained the text orally. Moreover, Chappuis herself noted that the Erfurt manuscript is from the early fifteenth century, just as the early manuscripts of the questions are, and the author cites Nicole Oresme and Petrarch, giving us a rough *terminus post quem* of the 1360s, which would

³⁴ James A. Weisheipl, «The Structure of the Arts Faculty in the Medieval University», *British Journal of Educational Studies* 19.3, 1971, p. 263-271, at 269 and 271.

³⁵ Marguerite Chappuis-Baeriswyl, «Notice sur le Traité de Pierre d’Ailly sur la *Consolation* de Boèce», *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 31, 1984, p. 89-107, at 102-107. See also Lodi Nauta, «The *Consolation*: The Latin Commentary Tradition: 800-1700», in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon, Cambridge, CUP, 2009, p. 255-278, at 277, n. 58, who strengthens Chappuis’ doubts.

suit Pierre's authorship ca. 1370-74³⁶. Now that three additional fifteenth-century manuscripts containing both the *principium* and the *expositio* have been identified, the attribution of the *expositio* to Pierre appears secure.

The *principium*, the *quaestiones*, and the *expositio* all came from the same context and probably once formed a single work, as in the case of the Franciscan Antonius Andreas' lectures on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, from which the *Expositio* survives in at least thirteen manuscripts and three early printings, while the *Quaestiones* are found in no less than 49 manuscripts and 21 editions, yet only one manuscript contains both *Expositio* and *Quaestiones*. Aside from this witness and a number of cross references, we know that the two works belong together because – as with Pierre's texts on *De consolatione* – they share the same *principium* sermon, with the theme *Gyrum caeli circuivi sola*, from the Bible, as we might expect from a mendicant³⁷.

It is clear from the above that Pierre d'Ailly's mature discussion of the modal status of the past and the future is not in his questions on *De consolatione*, but in those on the *Sentences*, which will therefore be the focus below.

Pierre d'Ailly on the Modal Status of the Past and the Future

“No one can begin to be predestined or reprobate”³⁸. This proposition logically entails a number of general assertions, especially considering that the first proposition that Pierre d'Ailly lays down in his question 12 on the *Sentences* is that “every rational creature was eternally predestined or reprobated by God”³⁹, which Pierre takes from Gregory of Rimini, along with the explanation that predestination is God's *propositum* to grant eternal life, while reprobation is God's *propositum* not to grant eternal life. Take a given person X. From eternity X is either predestined or reprobate. Let's say that X is reprobate from eternity. Since no one can begin to be reprobate, therefore God cannot today, 29 June 2017, make it so person X was, is, or will be predestined.

³⁶ Chappuis-Baeriswyl, «Notice sur le Traité», p. 107, n. 45.

³⁷ See now William O. Duba, «Three Franciscan Metaphysicians after Scotus: Antonius Andreae, Francis of Marchia, and Nicholas Bonet», in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. Fabrizio Amerini and Gabriele Galluzzo, Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 413-494, esp. 417-418, based on work by Giorgio Pini and Marek Gensler.

³⁸ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 1, ed. Chris Schabel, forthcoming: “Nullus potest incipere esse praedestinatus vel reprobatus.”

³⁹ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 1, ed. cit.: “Prima est quod quaelibet rationalis creatura a Deo fuit aeternaliter praedestinata vel reprobata.”

Recent research has revealed that Gregory of Rimini's double-predestinarian view was quite popular in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, so Pierre was in good company⁴⁰. Gregory's opinion is best expressed in the five propositions that he posits against recent opponents, which Pierre and others adopted, as follows: (1) "No one is predestined because of a good use of free will that God foreknew that he would have"; (2) "No one is predestined because he was foreknown to be in the end without a habitual obstacle to grace," that is, there is not even a negative cause of predestination in the predestined; this is because (3) "Whomever God has predestined He has predestined solely gratuitously and purely by mercy"; (4) "No one is reprobate because of a bad use of free will that God foreknew that he would have"; and (5) "No one is reprobate because he was foreseen to be in the end with an obstacle to divine grace." Regarding these propositions Pierre adds arguments for and against, mostly from Gregory himself, and not only does Pierre accept Gregory's view, but, as James Halverson has shown⁴¹, he actually strengthens it, adding a sixth proposition, which, "although [Gregory] does not posit it," Pierre admits, "nevertheless follows from the others and from [Gregory's] statements." The proposition is this: "Whomever God has reprobated He has reprobated without any cause at all in the person who is reprobate"⁴².

If one reads all of Pierre's question 12, 55 or so modern pages, it is clear that whatever nuance others try give to this position, and of course any opposing statements, Pierre explains away, even going so far as to fault Gregory for inconsistency on several occasions. Early on, for example, Pierre notes:

Although, according to Gregory and some others, if a person who is reprobate persevered in meritorious deeds, he would have eternal life – which, although it can be conceded in

⁴⁰ Monica Brinzei and Chris Schabel, «Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and the University of Vienna on the Eve of the Reformation», in *What is New in the New Universities? Learning in Central Europe in Later Middle Ages (1348-1500)*, ed. Elzbieta Jung, Turnhout, Brepols, forthcoming.

⁴¹ James L. Halverson, *Peter Aureol on Predestination: A Challenge to Late Medieval Thought*, Leiden, Brill, 1998, 164-166.

⁴² Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 2, ed. cit.: "His praemissis, contra praedictas opiniones ponit magister Gregorius et probat diffuse aliquas propositiones. Prima est quod nullus est praedestinatus propter bonum usum liberi arbitrii quem Deus praescivit illum habiturum. Secunda, nullus est praedestinatus quia praescitus fore finaliter sine obice habituali gratiae. Tertia est quod quemcumque Deus praedestinavit gratis praecise et pure misericorditer praedestinavit. Quarta est quod nullus est reprobatus propter malum usum liberi arbitrii quem Deus praescivit illum habiturum. Quinta est quod nullus est reprobatus quia praescitus fore finaliter cum obice divinae gratiae. Sexta potest addi quod, quemcumque Deus reprobavit, sine quacumque causa in ipso reprobato eum reprobavit... Sexta propositio, licet eam non ponat, tamen sequitur ex aliis et ex eius dictis, sicut patet."

one good sense, nevertheless is not true *de virtute sermonis* – it is certain concerning many people that God does not want them to persevere in meritorious deeds, for otherwise all would be saved. And so, whatever the truth is with this conditional: ‘If a person who is reprobate persevered in grace, God would give him eternal life’, nevertheless God does not want this condition to be fulfilled, because if He did, of course it would be fulfilled⁴³.

Much later, after criticizing William of Ockham’s attempts to get around the problem by claiming some sort of causal relationship going from our actions to our ultimate destiny, Pierre notes that even Gregory wishes to grant that future things are somehow a partial cause of God’s foreknowledge. But if so, Pierre objects, “Let Master Gregory or someone else for him give me a reason why, correspondingly, one cannot say in any way that, because Socrates will sin in the end, therefore God reprobates Socrates”⁴⁴.

If one takes the perspective of normal post-Reformation Roman Catholicism, in which one assigns at least some real causality to good works with respect to salvation, then one might infer from some of Pierre’s remarks that he shares this point of view. But if one looks at the problem through the eyes of a Latin theologian in the late fourteenth century, this inference is not warranted. This brings us back to the beginning of this paper. In asserting that “no past thing is able not to have been” and yet that “it would be just as easy to maintain that some past thing is able not to have been as it would be to maintain that some future thing is able not to come about,” it might seem that Pierre is leaving us an open choice between the power over the past or the determinism of the future. A modern Catholic might expect him to choose power over the past, but from a late fourteenth-century perspective we cannot assume this.

Traditionally, the modal status of the past and future had been treated separately, the future in distinctions 38-41 of book I of the *Sentences* on God’s foreknowledge and predestination, and the past in distinctions 42-44 on God’s power. The link between the

⁴³ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 1, ed. cit.: “Unde licet, secundum Gregorium et aliquos alios, si reprobatus perseveraret in bonis meritoriis ipse vitam aeternam haberet – quod, licet ad aliquem bonum sensum possit concedi, tamen de virtute sermonis non est verum – certum est tamen quod de multis Deus non vult quod in bonis meritoriis perseverent. Aliter enim omnes salvarentur. Et ideo, quicquid sit de veritate talis condicionalis: ‘Si reprobatus perseveraret in caritate, Deus daret sibi vitam aeternam’, tamen Deus non vult quod condicio illa impleatur, quia si vellet, utique impleretur; quare et cetera.”

⁴⁴ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 2, ed. cit.: “Sed dicat mihi magister Gregorius vel alius pro eo rationem quare non potest omnino proportionabiliter dici quod, quia Sortes finaliter peccabit, ideo Deus reprobatur Sortem.”

two issues is so strong for Pierre d’Ailly, however, that he places his main discussion on the modal status of the past in his treatment of God’s knowledge of the future, in question 11. If we look closely at the unusual context, what Pierre holds concerning power over the past may become more clear.

First, inspired by Rimini, Pierre puts forward a series of suppositions, the initial ones relating that every singular proposition about the future is determinately true or false, even if it concerns something contingent, although it is neither necessarily or inevitably true. For example, “A Frenchman will win Roland Garros in 2050” is either true or false determinately. Let us say that it is true (in which case God knows it). But it is not necessarily or inevitably true. In fact, Pierre says, this true proposition “is able never to have been true.” Still, until the tournament, the proposition is immutably true and cannot go from true to false, although after the event the future-tensed proposition will no longer be true about the 2050 tournament. These suppositions entail certain corollaries: “Some proposition is true and can be false, and yet it cannot cease or stop being true nor start to be false.” Again, “Some proposition was true *ab aeterno*, or would have been true if it had been formed, which is able to be and to have been false from eternity, although if it were false, it would not be disposed differently than it would have been *ab aeterno*.” Then, right before discussing the past, Pierre adds:

There is some proposition that was never true and yet it is in my power that it was always true or would have been true if it had been formed, and vice versa. This is clear: let A be something concerning which it is in my power to make it come about, and yet it will not come about. Then this was never true: ‘A will come about’, and yet it is in my power for A to come about and consequently for this proposition to be true: ‘A will come about’⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1, ed. cit.: “Primo sequitur quod aliqua propositio est vera et potest esse falsa, et tamen non potest illa cessare seu desinere esse vera nec incipere esse falsa... Quinto sequitur quod aliqua propositio ab aeterno fuit vera vel fuisset vera si fuisset formata, quae potest esse et ab aeterno fuisse falsa, et tamen si esset falsa, non aliter se haberet quam ab aeterno se habuisset... Sexto sequitur quod aliqua est propositio quae numquam fuit vera et tamen in potestate mea est quod ipsa semper fuerit vera vel fuisset vera si fuisset formata, et similiter econtra. Patet: sit *a* aliquid de quo in potestate mea sit facere ipsum evenire, et tamen non eveniet. Tunc ista numquam fuit vera: ‘*a* eveniet’, et tamen in potestate mea est quod *a* eveniet et per consequens haec fuerit vera: ‘*a* eveniet’... Octavo sequitur quod illa communis regula: ‘omnis propositio de praeterito vera est necessaria et omnis falsa est impossibilis’, non est universaliter vera... Ideo dico quod illa regula est vera de propositione de praeterito quae est simpliciter de re praeterita et non de re futura...”

This may seem radical, or a desperate attempt to avoid determinism, but by Pierre's time this position had become rather traditional following the developments of the previous half century, which led to statements that claimed that it is in Socrates' power to make it that God never foreknew that he would lecture tomorrow. This could be called a game of words, but it does combine the immutability of divine knowledge and the contingency of actions stemming from Socrates' free will: God has known from eternity that Socrates will lecture tomorrow, but Socrates is able not to; if Socrates ends up not lecturing tomorrow, that was what God knew from eternity. Not everyone will agree with this sort of formulation, but once one understands what it going on, there is little reason to object, although not everyone did understand.

Having already suggested that Socrates has power over the past, in some manner of speaking, because he can make it that a proposition about a future contingent was true *ab aeterno*, it should not be surprising that Pierre denies the universal validity of the following rule: 'Every true proposition about the past is necessary and every false one is impossible', because some such propositions depend on the future. Nevertheless, when it comes to a proposition that is only about the past, Pierre is clear: "Thus I say that that rule is true about a proposition about the past that is simply about a past thing." It is important that Pierre makes this statement in his own voice before we consider the doubts that he then raises, after concluding thus:

And for now it does not occur to me that from anywhere some objection could be given to the effect that such a proposition, if it is true, is not necessary, and if it is false, it is not impossible. And this maintaining that the past is unable not to have been and that the non-past is unable to have been, as is commonly held. But we will see more about this later⁴⁶.

Pierre then continues through familiar territory, appealing to the composite and divided senses of propositions to assert that it is not necessary for the future to come about, before he reaches the third doubt: "Just as the contingent future is able not to come about, and what exists, when it exists, is able not to exist, is the past able not to have

⁴⁶ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1, ed. cit.: "Et pro nunc non occurrit mihi quod alibi possit dari instantia quin semper talis propositio, si est vera, sit necessaria, et si est falsa, sit impossibilis. Et hoc tenendo quod praeteritum non potest non fuisse et quod non-praeteritum non potest fuisse, sicut communiter tenetur. Sed de hoc magis postea videbitur."

been, such that, just as contingency is granted with respect to future things and with respect to present things, is must be conceded with respect to past things?”⁴⁷.

This is a “difficult doubt,” Pierre says. Expanding on what he had done in brief in the questions on Boethius’ *De consolacione*, following Gregory of Rimini closely, Pierre ranges the ancients Gilbert of Poitiers and William of Auxerre in favor of power over the past, along with some unnamed moderns, while Gregory left the question undecided and William of Ockham and most others answered in the negative. I have argued that in fact Gilbert of Poitiers and William of Auxerre did not hold that God can undo the past⁴⁸, but Pierre took Gregory’s word for it. As mentioned, in his earlier treatise on *De consolacione* Pierre defended two propositions, first, “No past thing is able not to have been,” and, second, “It would be just as easy to maintain that some past thing is able not to have been as it would be to maintain that some future thing is able not to come about.” Now, in his questions on the *Sentences*, “without rash assertion,” Pierre cannot find a convincing argument for how one can accept the contingency of the future and deny the contingency of the past, especially when along with the contingency of the future we accept that God has foreknown it from eternity. Moreover, if God cannot will the world not to have been, for example, it seems that His power has changed, His freedom become limited. It is absurd to say that the mere existence of a thing in time necessitates God’s eternal will in any way.

On the other hand, Pierre remarks, it is not evident to us or demonstrable that the past is able not to have been, although neither is it evident to us or demonstrable that the future is able not to come about. Indeed, just as he concluded his article on fatalism in question 2 on *De consolacione*, echoing Pierre Ceffons’ position from 1348, “a philosopher, following pure natural reason, would have to grant that nothing future comes about contingently”⁴⁹. Accordingly, using his own voice, Pierre writes: “I say that *de virtute sermonis* this [proposition] is false: ‘God can make a thing that existed

⁴⁷ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1, ed. cit.: “Tertia dubitatio est utrum, sicut futurum contingens potest non fore et aliquid quod est, quando est, potest non esse, sic praeteritum possit non fuisse, ita quod, sicut concessa est contingentia respectu futurorum et respectu praesentium, etiam concedenda sit respectu praeteritorum. Et haec est difficilis dubitatio.”

⁴⁸ See above, n. 8.

⁴⁹ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1, ed. cit.: “Quarta est quod philosophus, sequens puram rationem naturalem, haberet concedere nullum futurum contingenter evenire.” Cf. Petrus de Alliaco, *In Boethii De consolacione Philosophiae*, q. 2, a. 2, punc. 3, ed. cit.: “Et breviter ad hoc respondeo quod, sequendo puram rationem naturalem, probabilior est opinio ponens omnia de necessitate evenire quam sit opposita.” For Ceffons, see the forthcoming published version of my lecture «Y a-t-il vraiment de la contingence dans l’univers?», 13 May 2016, in the series cited above, n. 8.

not to have existed’, and in the same way this [proposition is false]: ‘God can make it so that a thing that will be will not come about’⁵⁰.

One can accept certain propositions as true in the divided sense, for example: ‘God can make not to have been a thing that existed or a past thing’, and others in the composite sense, like ‘God can make the world or Adam not to have been’, but Pierre is careful to avoid discussing the composite sense of the first propositions. The reason is obvious: they are false in the composite sense, because once one has supposed that something is past, whether the world or Adam, then God cannot make it so that it was not past, without entailing a contradiction and violating the first principle. When one merely says ‘God can make Adam not to have been’, without claiming anything about Adam’s actual past existence, then the proposition as such involves no contradiction. But if one specifies what any Christian actually knows, then the proposition ‘God can make Adam, who existed, not to have been’ is false. As William Courtenay comments, “d’Ailly believes that with the supposition of the past, the proposition is false”⁵¹.

Yet although Pierre is anxious to deal with the issue, he also wishes to avoid derogatory remarks about God. This anxiety about slighting God is part of what made Thomas Bradwardine express himself in a way that led Thomas Buckingham to believe that Bradwardine held that God can change the past, although in this Buckingham was mistaken. Aware of this debate, Pierre has this to say:

One can probably grant that, understanding by ‘object of divine power’ that of which God is or can be the cause, a pure non-being or negation is not the object of divine power. And this is true maintaining against Bradwardine that God is not the cause except through his will of good pleasure by which He wills something to be or to come about. And thus He is not or cannot be the cause except of that which is or can be a positive entity. Speaking in this way it is clear that God cannot make the past or some thing not to have been or not to come about or not to be, taking ‘make’ (*facere*) properly insofar as it is the same as to

⁵⁰ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1, ed. cit.: “Secundo dico quod de virtute sermonis haec est falsa: ‘Deus potest facere rem quae fuit non fuisse’, et eodem modo ista: ‘Deus potest facere rem quae erit non fore’, quia ista est impossibilis propter implicationem: ‘Deus facit rem quae fuit non fuisse’, et sic ista: ‘Deus facit rem quae erit non fore’.”

⁵¹ William J. Courtenay, «John of Mirecourt and Gregory of Rimini on Whether God Can Undo the Past», *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 39, 1972, p. 224-253, and 40, 1973, p. 147-174, at part 2, 162, n. 151.

cause effectively. But it does not follow because of this that the past is unable not to have been, just as the future is able not to come about⁵².

This way of speaking may be infuriating, but there is always the worry about sacrificing the contingency of the future for the sake of asserting the necessity of the past. Thus Pierre's overall conclusion addresses why we think there is a difference between the past and the future:

I say that the cause is because through experience we evidently and clearly know that something was past, and we have the same judgment for any past thing with respect to its ability not to have been. But through experience we do not know so clearly that some future will come about, so we more easily imagine that it is able not to come about than that [something past] is able not to have been when we experience that it existed. This is especially the case when we are unaware of the difficulty of maintaining that something future comes about contingently or that it is able not to come about. So paying attention to the difficulty in maintaining such contingency of future things, it is as difficult to imagine the one as the other⁵³.

It is a curious conclusion, but Pierre places the difficulty where it belongs: on proving the contingency of the future. Given divine foreknowledge, and the use of past-tensed verbs to describe what God has known *ab aeterno*, it is clear that any claim about the necessity of the past will have repercussions for the future, which will appear equally

⁵² Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1: "Quarto dico quod probabiliter potest concedi quod intelligendo per obiectum divinae potentiae illud cuius Deus est aut esse potest causa, purum non-ens vel negatio non est obiectum potentiae divinae. Et hoc est verum tenendo contra Bradwardinum quod Deus non est causa nisi per velle beneplaciti quo vult aliquid esse vel fieri. Et sic non est vel esse potest causa nisi illius quod est vel esse potest entitas positiva. Sed sic loquendo patet quod Deus non posset facere praeteritum seu rem aliquam non fuisse vel non fore vel non esse, capiendo 'facere' proprie prout idem est quod causare effective etc. Nec tamen propter hoc sequitur quin praeteritum possit non fuisse, sicut futurum etiam potest non fore etc."

⁵³ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 11, a. 1, ed. cit.: "Si vero quaeratur, 'Cum ita faciliter sustinetur praeteritum posse non fuisse sicut futurum posse non fore, quare ergo facilius imaginamur secundum quam primum? Secundum enim communiter recipitur et conceditur et non primum', – dico quod causa est quia per experientiam evidenter et clare cognoscimus aliquod praeteritum fuisse et idem iudicium reputamus de quolibet praeterito quo ad posse non fuisse, sed per experientiam non sic clare cognoscimus aliquod futurum fore, ideo facilius imaginamur illud posse non fore quam illud posse non fuisse de quo experimur ipsum fuisse. Et hoc maxime quando non advertimus difficultatem sustinendi aliquod futurum contingenter evenire seu posse non fore. Unde advertens difficultatem in sustinendo talem contingentiam futurorum, ita difficulter imaginatur unum sicut reliquum, ut patet ex praedictis."

necessary, while any claim about the contingency of the future will have repercussions for the past, which will appear equally contingent.

Pierre chose to exploit the existence – false, I believe – of theologians who had argued that God can undo the past in order to present his own opinion cautiously. The extremely long article 3 of question 12 on predestination concerns revelation. According to Scripture, God has made many revelations about our future in what is our past. In the course of asking such things as whether God can lie or deceive, Pierre has to deal with the issue of whether something that has been revealed is able never to have been revealed, only this time he cannot jump back and forth between eternity and time to dodge the question. What Pierre does is take recourse, acutely or obliquely, time and again, to theologians who allegedly maintained that the past is able not to have been. At one point he even states that such a revelation cannot be undone, “supposing that the past is unable not to have been, which is commonly held, although the opposite is *probabile*”⁵⁴, a term that, for Pierre, is very vague. In this way, if one claims that such revelations can be undone, then any past thing is able not to have been.

Again, when Gregory of Rimini tries to have it both ways, Pierre objects:

But with reverence I say that, if it is posited that the past is unable not to have been, none of the aforesaid ways [of solving the problem] is sufficient. Nor can another way be given such that it would not be necessary to say that the argument concludes the truth, namely that God can say something false and deceive, just as the first opinion posits. So it is necessary either to say that the past is able not to have been or that God can have said something false. There is no middle ground⁵⁵.

Pierre rounds out his overall discussion, about 100 modern pages long, with four “rather useful” rules concerning the issue of past revelations, two of which apply to the matter at hand. According to the first rule, if a proposition such as this is true: ‘Socrates judged

⁵⁴ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 3, ed. cit.: “Patet, supposito quod praeteritum non potest non fuisse, quod communiter tenetur, quamvis oppositum sit probabile, ut supra declaratum est.” Cf. Petrus de Alliaco, *Principium I*, conc. 2, ed. Brinzei, p. 21.521-523: “Patet ex dictis, supposito quod impossibile sit praeteritum non fuisse, quod est probabile quamvis non sit evidens.”

⁵⁵ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 3, ed. cit.: “Sed cum reverentia dico quod, si ponatur quod praeteritum non potest non fuisse, nulla praedictarum viarum est sufficiens, nec est alia dabilis quin oporteat dicere quod argumentum concludit verum, scilicet quod Deus potest falsum dicere et decipere, sicut prima opinio ponit, ita quod oportet dicere vel quod praeteritum potest non fuisse vel quod Deus falsum potest dixisse. Nec est dare medium.”

that the Antichrist would come about’, then this proposition must be rejected: ‘Socrates is able not to have judged that the Antichrist would be’. The second rule applies to divine revelation, with the result that, “if this affirmative proposition is true: ‘God said or signified to a creature that the Antichrist would be’, then one must not grant this negative proposition: ‘God is able not to have said or to have signified [that]’, because these words signify not only an intrinsic act, but also a past effect *ad extra*”⁵⁶. It would seem that we have our answer, except that Pierre prefaces his four rules by saying that they apply when holding that a past thing is unable not to have been past⁵⁷!

So what does Pierre really hold? On the one hand, he never says that he thinks that the past can be undone, and when he does posit a proposition about it, he asserts that the past is unable not to have been. Almost all of Pierre’s discussion presupposes that the past cannot be undone. For example, Pierre’s approach to predestination, with all of his definitions and assumptions, makes no sense if God is able to undo the past. Divine eternity and immutability themselves mean little if an eternal decision to predestine a living person, who has actually existed in our time for decades, can now be reversed such that that person was never predestined, or never even existed.

On the other hand, Pierre repeatedly declares that he does not see a sufficient difference between God’s changing His eternal determination with respect to something that is in our past, like Adam’s sin, and His changing His eternal determination with respect to something that is in our future, like the coming of the Antichrist. Not knowing how to prove this difference, and rejecting previous attempts to do so, or at least pointing out how they fail to address the difficulty, Pierre avoids making a definitive statement. Although he appears never to have read any theologian who claimed that God can undo the past, his main source, Gregory of Rimini, reported that there had been such doctors. This allows Pierre to present his reader, on a number of occasions, with a choice, not the choice that Augustine maintained that Cicero offered his readers, between divine foreknowledge and human freedom, but the choice between

⁵⁶ Petrus de Alliaco, *I Sent.*, q. 12, a. 3, ed. cit.: “Secunda regula est quod nulla propositio talis est concedenda de Deo nisi ubi verbum significat actum Deo intrinsecum et non effectum praeteritum ad extra. Verbi gratia, si ista affirmativa sit vera: ‘Deus dixit vel significavit creaturae Antichristum fore’, haec negativa non est concedenda: ‘Deus potest non dixisse vel non significasse’, quia ista verba significant non solum actum intrinsecum, sed effectum ad extra praeteritum.”

⁵⁷ Thus far, in hindsight, my discussion largely reinforces the two-paragraph section on Pierre d’Ailly in Calvin Normore, «Future Contingents», in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, Cambridge, CUP, 1982, p. 358-381, at 377-378.

a fixed past and future, on the one hand, and a mutable past and future, on the other. From what we know about Pierre in other contexts, and from most of what he writes in question 2 of his treatise on Boethius' *De consolazione* and in questions 11 and 12 of book I of Lombard's *Sentences*, if Pierre had to make this choice, he would choose determinism.