

ASTROLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND THE 1270 PARIS CONDEMNATION IN JOHN PECHAM'S *QUAESTIONES DISPUTATAE DE STELLIS*

FRANCESCO DE BENEDITTIS

Abstract: This article undertakes the first comprehensive analysis of John Pecham's *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*, composed in early January 1271, situating the text within the intellectual and institutional context shaped by the Paris condemnation of 1270. Concentrating on Questions 1 to 4, the study elucidates Pecham's tripartite division of events into natural, voluntary, and extraordinary, a conceptual scheme that informs both his refutation of astrological determinism and his broader critique of astrology as science. This distinction provides the foundation for Pecham's account of astral causation and his redefinition of celestial bodies as mere signs (natural, accidental, or *mirabilia*), rather than genuine efficient causes. His defence of human freedom, in turn, leads him to formulate an interconnected treatment of bodily disposition, predestination, fate, grace, and providence, engaging directly with the central theological debates of the early 1270s. By examining the *Quaestiones* in the context of Pecham's wider works, including his *Quodlibeta*, the *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, and the *Tractatus de anima*, this article offers the first sustained scholarly analysis of the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*, considering that they may constitute a deliberate intervention into contemporary discussions on astrological determinism in the immediate aftermath of Tempier's 1270 condemnation.

Keywords: John Pecham; 1270 Paris condemnation; astrological determinism; providence; Franciscan thought.

1. Introduction

On 10 December 1270, the Archbishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, formally condemned a list of thirteen propositions, anticipating by seven years the more extensive condemnation of 1277. These articles comprised a range of Aristotelian doctrines that were then circulating at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris, including theses concerning the unity of the intellect, the eternity of the world, the relationship between the soul and the body, free will, and astrological determinism.¹ Only a few weeks later, at the very beginning of January 1271, on the occasion of the Feast of Epiphany ("Occasione soleminis Epiphaniae

1 On Tempier's condemnation in 1270, see DENIFLE 1889, I, n. 432, 486–487. Moreover, see HILLE 2005; BIANCHI 2009; BIANCHI 1996; WIPPEL 2003; DALES 1995, 181–191.

incumbentis”),² John Pecham, then *magister theologiae* at the University of Paris and *lector* at the Franciscan *studium generale*, composed and publicly disputed a set of questions now known as the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*. These four questions adhere to the characteristic structure of scholastic disputations. In contrast to Question 4, which integrates the *disputatio* and *determinatio* into a continuous exposition, Questions 1 to 3 address these two stages separately. Pecham first compiles the material corresponding to the *disputatio* – that is, the introduction and discussion of the theme, including the presentation of arguments pro and contra – and subsequently provides the three *determinationes*, namely, his proposed resolutions.³ This method of debating, composing, and structuring the questions is typical of Pecham and consistently evidenced in his other writings, reflecting a systematic approach to organising disputed questions.⁴

First edited by Girard J. Etzkorn in 2002, alongside Pecham’s other disputed questions,⁵ these four questions not only display his interest in astronomical, astrological, and cosmological matters, but also reveal deeper theological and doctrinal concerns that were closely intertwined with the intellectual developments of the time.⁶ In these, Pecham directly tackles the topic of astrological determinism and the influence of celestial bodies on human affairs, addressing related topics such as fate, free will, predestination, and divine providence.

Due to these elements, it is reasonable to explore the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* in the light of the 1270 condemnation. While John Pecham has received considerable scholarly attention, especially on topics such as free will and the soul,⁷ this specific set of questions has thus far escaped systematic investigation,

2 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, n. 1, 195.

3 For the general structure of the *quaestiones disputatae*, see BAZÀN, WIPPEL, FRANSEN, JACQUART 1985, 58–70.

4 For example, see IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de beat. an. et corp.*, qq. 9–12, 540–559; IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. I*, qq. 5–6, 14–20; IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. I*, qq. 33–36, 70–73; IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. II*, qq. 7–8, 91–96; IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. II* qq. 21–22, 117–119.

5 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002.

6 On the influence of celestial bodies on human beings, see, for example: SOROKINA 2021; GRANT 1996, 569–617; GRANT 1987; GREGORY 1992; TESTER 1987; NORTH 1986.

7 See, for example, SILVA 2021; SACCENTI 2021; STADTER 1971, 120–143; COLLEY 2015; COLLEY 2016; TURI 1997; SPETTMANN 1919; HACKETT 2018; HACKETT 2006; BOUREAU 2002; WILSON 1998;

thereby representing a significant lacuna in current research. The aim of this study is to bridge this gap. By situating the work within its historical context, it offers a close analysis of Pecham's *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*, with particular emphasis on Questions 3 and 4. It demonstrates how Pecham's treatment of astrological determinism and human freedom engages directly with central theological debates of the early 1270s. After reconstructing Pecham's principal responses to each of the four questions, the analysis will turn to his replies to the *argumenta*, which open up further avenues for discussion on predestination, fate, providence, and the critique of astrology. The article concludes by reassessing the significance of the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* and their potential connection to Tempier's 1270 condemnation.

2. The star of Bethlehem: neither a true star nor a comet

Grounding his discussion on the biblical account of the Magi, the first two questions are devoted to the star of Bethlehem and are primarily exegetical in nature. Nevertheless, Pecham uses them to introduce certain considerations regarding the scientific character of some celestial phenomena.⁸

Question 1 asks whether the star of Bethlehem was a true star (*Utrum stella, quae duxit magos ad Christum, fuit vera stella*).⁹ Drawing on *Genesis* 1, Pecham affirms that the natural role of the stars is to distinguish day from night ("stellae [...] sunt distinctiva dierum et noctium"). The star of Bethlehem, however, was not principally intended for this purpose ("non erat ad aliquod istorum principaliter ordinatum"), but served solely as a guide to the Magi.¹⁰ Taking into

ROHMER 1928. See also HOFFMANN 2020, 221–222; LENZI 2011; DALES 1995, 126–132; SILEO 1999; VANNI ROVIGHI 1936; VANNI ROVIGHI 1952.

8 The combination of exegetical, and scientific elements is another characteristic feature of Pecham's argumentative method. This approach allows him to elucidate and strengthen his theological claims through the use of scientific metaphors, allegories, and reasoning, thereby illustrating the harmony between biblical texts, theological doctrines, and scientific knowledge. On this point, see DE BENEDITTIS 2023.

9 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, 195–200; 206–211.

10 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, resp., 206–207: "Solutio. Ad primam quaestionem dicendum quod stellae quae vere sunt stellae, ordinant mundum in distinctione temporali, in virtute complexionali, in continua corruptione et generatione temporali. Unde positae sunt in firmamento caeli, ut dividant diem ac noctem, ut sint in signa et tempora, et dies et annos. Ut luceant in firmamento caeli, et illuminent terram. Ex his verbis colligi potest caelestium luminarium et stellarum definitio, quoniam stellae, immo

account the exegetical works of John Chrysostom, Pecham further advances four scientific considerations in support of this thesis.¹¹ He notes that its motion differed from that of ordinary stars, which move from east to west, whereas the star of Bethlehem moved from north to south (“ab artico in meridiem”). He also observes that its brightness was due to its mixed, solid composition (“stella huiusmodi erat naturae elementaris mixtae solidae”), which, unlike that of other stars, enabled it to shine even during the day without being hidden by the sun (“corpora luminosa mixta fulgent in praesentia solis”).¹² Moreover, it could appear in Palestine and disappear in Jerusalem, which suggests that its

universaliter luminaria caelestia, sunt distinctiva dierum et noctium, artificialium significativa temporalium eventuum, efficientia differentias dierum naturalium et annorum, ornantia caelos, et terras illustrantia. Illud autem sidus; secundum testimonium Scripturarum, non erat ad aliquod istorum principaliter ordinatum, sed tantum ad ducatum magorum ad Christum. Nec enim distinguebat diem a nocte, quia de die lucebat; minime caelos ornabat; terram non illustrabat, nisi ad effectum particularem, reges illos scilicet dirigendo. Unde, quamvis similitudinem stellae haberet et de proprietatibus stellarum, quantum fini eius congruebat, tamen proprie loquendo stella non erat.”

11 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, resp., 207: “Unde Chrysostomus, *Super Matthaeum*, homelia 6: ‘Non multarum haec stella una fuit, magis autem neque stella, ut mihi videtur, sed quaedam virtus invisibilis, in talem formata vitam’. Ad hoc autem quattuor ponit rationes. Primo, ratione motus, quoniam stellae omnes ab oriente vadunt in occidentem; haec autem ab artico in meridiem ferebatur; ita enim Palestina ad Persidam iacet. Haec Chrysostomus. – Secunda ratio eius est a parte suae apparitionis. Unde dicit: ‘Non enim in nocte apparet, sed in die media sole lucente, quod non est virtutis stellae, sed neque lunae, quae radio apparente solari occultatur confestim. Haec autem stella propriae claritatis abundantia radios vicit solares’. Ex quo apparet quod haec stella erat naturae elementaris mixtae. Luminaria enim caelestia disparent in praesentia solis; et lux similiter ignea occultatur. Sed corpora luminosa mixta fulgent in praesentia solis. Ex quo videtur quod haec stella huiusmodi erat naturae elementaris mixtae solidae, non celestis vel extracaelestis rarae. – Tertia ratio est, quia apparebat et occultabatur rursus ostendens viam, quoniam apparebat intransitibus Palestinam, occultabatur vero intransitibus Ierusalem, deinde monstravit se ipsam. Quia, inquit, non est stellae motus vel virtutis cuiusdam rationalis. Quod probat sic: Neque enim proprium gressum habebat, sed cum oportebat ire, ibat, et cum stare, stabat. Ad id quod oportebat omnia dispensans sicut columna olim nubis. – Quarta ratio est ex situ: quia deorsum movebatur prope terram, quia aliter non poterat monstrare locum ita parvum sicut tugurium. Si enim fuisset una stellarum celestium prae sui magnitudine totam adumbrasset Palestinam. Quamvis igitur minor esset stellis in veritate, maior tamen apparebat de propinquitate.” A similar scheme is also found in BONAVENTURA 1885, d. 14, pars 2, a. 2, q. 3, resp. ad 3, 364^b; BONAVENTURA 1901, *Serm.* 13, 168^{a-b}.

12 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, resp., 207. On this topic, see CROZIER 2024; GRANT 1996, 395–400; DUHEM 1985, 480–482. On the composition of the stars, see ROBERTUS GROSSETESTE 1912, *De gen. stell.*, 33. On the meaning of *solidum* with reference to planets and stars, see GRANT 1996, 328–370.

motion was not celestial but elemental, being moved by angel (“nullus ei motus caelestis quam elementaris, sed angeli moventis”). Finally, its magnitude must have been proportioned in such a way that it did not overshadow the whole of Palestine, while still being able to indicate a small and specific location, such as a humble hut. Based on these elements, Pecham concludes that it was a luminous elementary body, divinely formed, moved by an angel, guiding the Magi. Although it was called a star because it resembled the celestial bodies in appearance, it differed from them in nature.¹³

Having established in Question 1 that the star of Bethlehem was not a genuine celestial star, Pecham turns in Question 2 to consider whether it might at least be classified as a comet (*An stella fuerit saltem cometa*).¹⁴ Here again, his answer is negative: as it was not a true star, “neither was it a true comet, although it had some resemblance to comets.”¹⁵ His rejection rests on several arguments. Firstly, no source records that it adhered to any fixed or wandering star, as

13 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, resp., 207–208: “Stella igitur dicebatur, quia stellarum erat apparentiae. Sed a stellis differebat naturaliter, quia erat naturae elementaris quantitate, quia longe erat minor stellis; claritate, quia lucebat in praesentia solis; motu, quia nullus ei motus celestis quam elementaris, sed angeli moventis; situ, quia [prope] terram movebatur. Haec igitur stella erat luminosum corpus elementare, divinitus formatum, ab angelo motum, ad ducatum magorum, non quidem secundum considerationem mathematicam, ut optime dicit Chrysostomus. Non utique astronomiae hoc opus est, a stellis scire eos qui pariuntur, sed ab hora eorum qui pariuntur praedicere futura. Hi namque neque parienti mulieri asserunt, neque tempus cognoverunt secundum quod natus est.” From a grammatical point of view, the sentence “Nullus ei motus celestis quam elementaris, sed angeli moventis” is problematic. Two alternative emendations may be proposed. The first possibility is that *nullus* represents a scribal corruption of *minus*, as the abbreviations *mi9* and *nll9* are easily confounded. The reading “minus ei motus celestis quam elementaris, sed angeli moventis” would then yield the sense: “with respect to motion, it possessed less of a celestial than of an elementary movement, that is, not so much a celestial as an elementary motion, but one proper to, or derived from, the angel that moves.” A second possibility is to assume the omission of *tam*, producing “nullus ei motus tam celestis quam elementaris, sed angeli moventis.” In this case, the phrase would mean: “it had no motion, whether celestial or elementary, but only that of the angel that moves.” Since I have not yet had the opportunity to consult the manuscript directly, both readings must remain conjectural; nonetheless, considering the context of the entire passage, I incline toward the first solution. Concerning the principle of celestial motion as developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, see DONATI 2015.

14 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 2, 200–202; 211–213.

15 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 2, resp., 211: “Ad secundam questionem: sicut haec stella non erat vera stella sed conveniens cum ipsa, ita nec erat vera stella comata, quamvis haberet aliquam convenientiam cum comatis.” Unless taken from a translated edition, all English translations are mine.

certain comets do, nor is there any record of it possessing a tail; it is described solely as appearing in the form of a star. Secondly, comets are observed in the upper part of the atmosphere, whereas this star moved close to the Earth and was therefore only seen by few. Had it been located higher in the air, it would have been visible in every region. Thirdly, comets appear at night, whereas this star also appeared during the day. Finally, its duration was far exceeded that of any ordinary comet by far, as it remained visible for about two years, as attested in the Gospel. “Therefore, strictly speaking, it was not a comet.”¹⁶

Although treated succinctly, these first two questions already introduce some theological themes that Pecham will examine in greater detail in Questions 3 and 4. For example, at the end of Question 1, Pecham speaks about the role of astronomy,¹⁷ whereas, responding to the argument of Question 2, he stressed the significance of certain natural signs and their connection to human events.¹⁸

3. The influence of stars: not causes but mere signs

Questions 3 and 4 of the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* mark a notable shift in tone and intention. They move beyond biblical exegesis in order to face the theological and philosophical implications of astrological determinism. In these

16 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 2, resp., 211: “Tum quia cometae habent lumen clarum in superiori parte aeris; haec autem prope terram movebatur, unde a paucis visa est. Si enim fuisset in superiori parte aeris, apparuisset in omni climate. Et Plinius non tacuisset de ea, qui illius temporis refert cometas. Tum quia cometae apparent de nocte, non de die; ista autem e converso. Tum ratione durationis suae, quia ista videtur apparuisse circiter tempus duorum annorum. Quia, sicut dicit Chrysostomus: ‘Ante nativitatem Christi per multum tempus, videtur mihi, stella apparuisse, quoniam in itinere multum erant consumpturi tempore magi, ut confestim, cum natus esset, assisterent ei.’ Et dicit in alio tractatu quod ‘stella locuta est magis ut profiscerentur in iudaeam; proficiscentibus autem eis per biennium praecedebat stella.’ Cui convenit Evangelium in quod dicitur: Occidit omnes pueros a bimatu, et ita secundum tempus stellae quod exquisierat a magis. Cometae autem non solent tantum durare. Amplius, cometae habent igneam claritatem. Haec autem non habuit hanc claritatem, quia tunc in die minime luxisset. Igitur non fuit, proprie loquendo, cometa.”

17 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 1, resp., n. 53, 208: “Non utique astronomiae hoc opus est, a stellis scire eos qui pariuntur, sed ab hora eorum qui pariuntur praedicere futura. Hi namque neque parienti mulieri asserunt, neque tempus cognoverunt secundum quod natus est.”

18 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 2, resp. ad 2, ad 3, ad 4, n. 68–70, 212.

Questions, Pecham systematically articulates his position on the influence of celestial bodies, maintaining that celestial bodies are never the proper cause of human affairs; rather, they may function as signs.¹⁹ The two Questions are closely connected, as the argument of the third is continued and completed in the fourth, as evidenced by the parallel argumentative structure that Pecham employs. In both, Pecham distinguishes three categories of events: those belonging to the natural order (“pure naturalia”), those pertaining to the will (“pure voluntaria”), and those occurring accidentally or extraordinarily (“pure accidentalia” or *res mirabilis*).²⁰ This tripartite framework is the foundation for his entire discussion. In Question 3, Pecham rejects the notion that celestial bodies are properly causes of natural bodies, voluntary actions, or events attributed to fortune or chance.²¹ In Question 4, he acknowledges that in certain cases celestial bodies may serve as signs of natural or extraordinary events, yet he firmly denies that they can signify events properly pertaining to the will. His investigation opens with a bifurcation of the central question, namely, whether the stars impose fatal necessities on those who are born (*Utrum stellae imprimant fatales necessitates nascentibus*).²² The first part asks whether the angels who move the stars influence free will; the second considers whether the stars at birth impart an influence that governs human beings throughout their lifetime.

3.1 Celestial bodies and natural things

Regarding natural events, Pecham allows for some influence of celestial bodies on natural bodies but qualifies their causality as limited or indirect. In Question 3, he acknowledges that celestial bodies affect both the human body and the soul

19 In building his argument, Pecham closely follows the theological framework developed by Bonaventure in his *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*. See, for example, BONAVENTURA 1885, d. 14, pars 2, a. 2, q. 3, resp. ad 1 et 2, 360b–361a.

20 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis* q. 3, resp., n. 72, 213: “Ad tertiam quaestionem dicendum quod multum refert quaerere an angeli moventes stellas influant super liberum arbitrium, et an in principio nativitatis inferant toto tempore regitivam. Ad quaestionem igitur respondendum, quoniam horum accidentium quaedam sunt pure naturalia, quaedam pure voluntaria, quaedam pure accidentalia, sicut fortuna.” For this passage, I changed Etzkorn’s punctuation. See also IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 22, 220: “Responsio. Quae in tempore geruntur, sunt in triplici differentia. Est enim triplex cursus rerum: naturalis, voluntarius et mirabilis.”

21 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, 202–206; 213–216.

22 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, 217–223.

(“*quantum ad corpus et quantum ad animam*”), but he clarifies that the influence on the soul is mediated “insofar as the disposition of the body has repercussions [*redundat*] on the soul.”²³ Here, Pecham establishes clear boundaries: while celestial bodies exert a certain influence on the body, their effects on the soul are indirect and depend on the disposition of the body (“*dispositio corporis*”). This disposition, as a mediator between the human body and the soul, is crucial to Pecham’s preservation of the absolute freedom of the human will, which he prioritises throughout his investigation. In particular, bodily disposition becomes central in specific cases where human beings behave “according to excess and defect” (“*sicut excedentia et excessa*”), acts properly attributable to them.²⁴ By contrast, the celestial bodies influence the universal nature. Quoting John of Damascus, Pecham observes that natural events, like the varying quality of air, shape different and individual complexions, habits, and dispositions. As a result, people “born under one part of the sky” tend to resemble each other in bodily or intellectual traits when compared to other human beings “who are born under another.” For instance, as Pecham exemplifies, people belonging to the same lineage often resemble one another in terms of their vigour or frailty, wisdom or folly. Although particular nature exerts a stronger influence than the universal nature in determining individual acts, Pecham acknowledges that celestial bodies play a certain role in shaping character, behaviour and habits of human beings.²⁵

How these celestial bodies may influence human behaviour, character, and habits is the main topic of Question 4, in which Pecham considers celestial bo-

23 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 72, 213: “In naturalibus multum possunt corpora caelestia quantum ad corpus et quantum ad animam, in quantum dispositio corporis redundat in animam. Unde videmus illos qui sub una parte caeli nascuntur esse melioris condicionis corporalis et melioris intellectus quam sub alia communiter, quamvis in particulari se habeant sicut excedentia et excessa. Theologus: ‘Non poterunt oculi evadere a gravi impedimento, in cuius nativitate fuerunt luminaria impedita.’ Damascenus, 5 cap.: ‘Qualitas aeris facta a sole et luna et astris, alii et alii diversas complexionones et habitus et dispositiones constituit.’ In hoc tamen magis dominatur natura particularis quam universalis. Unde videmus unius generis homines esse similes alacritate et industria, vel fragilitate et stultitia, quamvis aliter plerumque contingat. Unde falsa est illa propositio Ptolemei: ‘Non amittit sensum in cuius nativitate luna redit ad Mercurium.’”

24 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 72, 213.

25 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 72, 213.

dies as natural signs (“signa naturalia”) when they refer to natural events.²⁶ Pecham distinguishes between the macrocosm (*maior mundus*) and the microcosm (*minor mundus*).²⁷ In the greater world (“quantum ad maiorem mundum”), natural events serve as natural and unfailing signs insofar as what they signify occurs infallibly.²⁸ For example, the moon, assisted by other celestial bodies, induces the elevation of vapours, which invariably leads to tides. The moon, however, is not the direct or proper cause of tides, but an infallible sign of their occurrence.²⁹ When it is in the appropriate disposition to cause the effect (“in debita dispositione causandi”), it acts as a remote efficient cause (“efficaciter”), guaranteeing the infallibility (“infallibiliter”) of its causal effects.³⁰

In the microcosm (“quantum vero ad minorem mundum”), celestial bodies become unfailing signs of bodily complexions.³¹ Considering the relationship

26 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 22, 220: “Corpora igitur caelestia respectu eventuum naturalium sunt signa naturalia.”

27 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 23, 220: “Cursus autem naturalis rerum, vel pertinet ad maiorem mundum, vel ad minorem.” On the concept of *maior mundus* and *minus mundus* in the twelfth- and thirteenth- century anthropology, see CHENU 1976, 34–43; WÉBER 1991, 61–73; FINCKH 1999; SCHIPPERGES 1962. For the broader context of this topic, see ZONTA 2005; ALLERS 1944; OLERUD 1951; CONGER 1922.

28 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 23, 220.

29 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 23, 220: “Quantum ad maiorem mundum sunt signa naturalia et indeficientia, quia cum significant efficaciter, eveniunt quae significantur infallibiliter. Cum enim luna domina humoris exsistit in debita dispositione causandi elevationem vaporum, sequitur inundatio aquarum infallibiliter. Non est autem in debita dispositione nisi adiungatur ei assistentia planetarum sibi in natura conformium, sicut dicunt mathematici, quamvis quantum est ex se, semper significet super humorem.”

30 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 23, 220.

31 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 24, 220–221: “Quantum vero ad minorem mundum, sciendum est quod corpora caelestia sunt signa infallibiliter complexionum. Unde Damascenus, 5 cap.: ‘Qualitas aeris facta a sole et luna et astris, alii et alii diversas complexionem et habitus et dispositiones constituit.’ Item, Ptolemaeus, in *Quadripartito* III libro cap. 2: Tanta vis naturarum nascentium significatur ab aspectibus planetarum et viribus suis, quia quidam sapientum cum voluerunt scire, profunditer aspectus, inspexerunt quando cecidit sperma. Illud significat super naturam nati et complexionem. Et dico hoc quantum patiuntur causae inferiores. Aliud enim significat aspectus Martialis in tertio vel secundo climate, aliud in septimo. Sed utrobique proportionaliter secundum diversam proportionem <et> proiectionem radiorum. Similiter, dominium Martiale super sperma phlegmaticum significat, ut est possibile, diminutionem naturae phlegmaticae; super autem sperma cholericum significat intensionem cholerae quantum ad alia accidentia nati. Potest per dispositionem generantis multum impediri significatio planetarum, sed non plene. Numquid enim Saturnus potest sic melancholiam concitare, quin anima possit per gratiam, immo per artificium, in laetitiam se excitare?

between the nature and the complexion of a newborn and the planets present at the time of its birth, Pecham again cites John of Damascus, together with the *Quadripartitum*. While Pecham does not deny celestial bodies any role, he reduces stars to lower causes (“*causae inferiores*”), subordinate to the superior causes, thereby limiting their influence. For instance, the dominance of Mars over the phlegmatic or choleric seed may diminish the newborn’s phlegmatic nature or intensify their choleric qualities. Nevertheless, Pecham states that, even at this stage, “the disposition of the begetter can considerably hinder [*multum impedi*ri]” the influence of the planets, though never completely (“*non plene*”) obstruct them. From this perspective, Pecham stresses that divine grace (“*per gratiam*”) or human artifice (“*per artificium*”) can alter celestial influence for human benefits.³² Therefore, in the order of causation, divine grace and human acts precede the stars. Knowledge of the stars and their movements enables human beings to use these indirect celestial influences advantageously, in a similar way as sowers assist in plant growth. In this way, a wise human being can use the work of the stars, limiting or directing the action of Saturn or Jupiter for human good.

This position is corroborated in other works, such as *Quodlibet III*, Question 14, where Pecham investigates whether someone can be bewitched through bodily action (*Utrum per actionem corporis possit aliquis malefici*). Here, Pecham insists that “nobody acts upon a spirit naturally.”³³ Although celestial bodies

Si quis purgationem acceperit, luna cum Iove existente, abbreviabitur tempus eius vel effectus eius minuetur. Sed anima sapiens ita adiuvabit opus stellarum quemadmodum seminator conformationes naturales. Unde Ptolomeus in *Centiloquio* propositione 7 vel 8: ‘Sapiens anima potest iuvare celestem operationem quemadmodum seminans per virtutem, per cultum, per purgationem’.”

32 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 24, 220–221.

33 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. III*, q. 14, resp., n. 4, 161: “Nullum corpus agit in spiritum naturaliter. Potest tamen corpus humanum per corpora celestia alterari et aptari ad diversitatem affectuum. Unde, eorum qui nascuntur sub una plaga caeli sunt alii aliis crudeliores, alii benigniores. Et istae virtutes stellarum imprimuntur quibusdam corporibus sicut lapidibus pretiosis. Unde quidam lapides dicuntur facere amabiles suos portatores. Amplius, quod non est naturale, potest per industriam augeri. Possunt enim colligi influentiae stellarum per specula comburentia in punctum unum et multum incorporari aliqui rei quae obicitur tali incursui. Et hoc credo fecisse Moysen, qui erat peritus astrorum et eruditus in omni sapientia Aegyptiorum, ut dicitur Act. 7,22. Sculptura tamen imaginum non facit nisi ad decorem, nisi forte per incisionem esset gemma amplius influentiae receptiva, dum ipsa incisio magis aperiret venas lapidis. Ad praedictam talium igitur influentiarum, nulla affuit liberi arbitrii facultatum, quamvis in corpore possit facere vehement.”

may influence the body and predispose human beings to particular affections, so that “those who are born under one region of the sky, some are found to be more cruel than others, and others more kindly”³⁴, human efforts can intervene to direct and modify the influence of the stars. To illustrate this idea, Pecham refers to the example of burning mirrors, which concentrate the influence of celestial bodies into a single point and thus intensify their effects.³⁵ Nevertheless, he concludes that, although celestial bodies can severely influence the human body, “no exercise of free will is present” therein.³⁶

In summary, for Pecham, celestial bodies, when acting upon purely natural things (“pure naturalia”), function as lower causes influencing the human body and, indirectly, the soul through bodily disposition. They also serve as natural, unfailingly signs (“signa naturalia et indeficientia”) of natural phenomena in the macrocosm and microcosm, as exemplified by lunar tides or Mars’s effects on newborn complexions.³⁷

3.2 Celestial bodies and will

In contrast to natural things, celestial bodies exert no influence over matters entirely subject to the human will (“summe voluntaria”). For Pecham, preserving the absolute freedom of the human will, which grounds moral responsibility, remains his primary concern. In Question 3 of the *Quaestiones de stellis*, Pecham clearly states that celestial bodies have no power to influence the will (“nihil possunt in voluntatem efficere”).³⁸ While acknowledging that they may incline human beings by bodily disposition, the will itself remains genuinely free.³⁹ For example, if Mercury occupies the house of Mars at the time of birth, the newborn may be predisposed to malicious suspicion and possess a cunning mind

34 IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. III*, q. 14, resp., n. 4, 161.

35 A similar argumentation is also found in IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl.*, q. 31, resp., n. 6, 246–247.

36 IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. III*, q. 14, resp., n. 4, 161 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 33).

37 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., nn. 23–24, 220–221 (for the text, see *supra*, nn. 29 and 31).

38 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 213–214 (for the text, see *infra*, n. 40).

39 On this point, see *supra*, nn. 23 and 31. See also IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. III*, q. 14, resp., n. 4, 161 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 33); IOHANNES PECHAM 1948, 41 (for the text, see *infra*, n. 53).

when it comes to affairs; if Mercury is in the house of Saturn, they may rather be inclined to intellectual activities and philosophy. Nevertheless, despite such predispositions, the human will retains its absolute freedom.⁴⁰

The possibility of the will to choose evil freely testifies to its genuine freedom. When challenged about the origin of movement in evil acts,⁴¹ Pecham responds directly and unambiguously: “free will does move itself toward evil.”⁴² The opponent’s objection that free will cannot move itself because “nothing can be simultaneously both mover and moved”⁴³ offers Pecham the opportunity to explain the entire dynamics of how free will operates. When the mind apprehends an object through the intellect (“secundum intellectum”), it cau-

40 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 213–214: “In his vero summe voluntaria, nihil possunt in voluntatem efficere. Unde in quinto verbo *Centiloquii* dicitur: Deus ‘multum malum prohibere poterit, qui secundum stellas est, cum eius naturam praesciverit venturum’. Possunt tamen inducere pronitates ad malum, sicut idem dicit. Cum fuerit Mercurius in radice nativitatis in domo Martis, tunc erit malae suspitionis et astuti ingenii in negotiis. Cum fuerit in radice nativitatis in domo Saturni, erit natus magni intellectus longaeque cogitationis et sapiens et philosophus.”

41 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, contra 5, n. 47, 205: “Item, cum liberum arbitrium movetur ad malum, quaero: unde est iste motus? An a Deo; non, quia non est causa mali. Non a libero arbitrio, quia nihil idem est movens et motum, quia movens est actu, motum autem potentia. Impossibile est autem idem esse actu et potentia. Ergo impossibile est liberum arbitrium movere se. Ergo, si movebitur ad malum, movebitur ab extra; et certum est quod si nullus esset alius homo, nullus diabolus instigans, posset homo moveri ad malum. Et hoc posito, non esset motor nisi stellae; ergo movent ad malum.”

42 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 5, n. 78, 215: “Ad sextum dico quod movet se liberum arbitrium ad malum, quia liberum arbitrium non dicit solam voluntatem, sed facultatem eius et rationis. Cum igitur apprehendit mens secundum intellectum, delectatur secundum affectum. Et in quantum delectatur, consequitur actum novum quo potest movere se ad acquisitionem vel electionem. Et quia potest movere se ad superiora vel inferiora; ideo etc. Universaliter omnis potentia in se reflexa potest se movere. Verbi gratia, cum mens intelligit, ipsa secundum quod lucens perficit possibilitatem, scilicet secundum apprehendens. Ita in voluntate, cum post apprehensionem intellectualis pulchritudinis delectatur per actum delectationis fit actu ut moveat se in actum electionis. Amplius, omnis virtus unita plus est infinita. Quia igitur potentia super se reflexa magis sibi unitur quam non-reflexa, ipsa sibi novam actualitatem accipit, cum possit movere se ut est potentia absoluta. Haec enim est ratio quare bruta aguntur necessario a sensibus, quia non possunt non delectari in illis.” Etzkorn changed the manuscript’s numbering of the arguments. However, the sequence preserved in *F* is mainly correct. For example, where Etzkorn reads *quintum* (p. 215, l. 10), *F* properly retains *quartum*; where he reads *sextum* (p. 215, l. 18), *F* correctly has *quintum*, and so forth. The only evident mistake made by the copyist is *quartum* (p. 215, l. 2) in place of *tertium*.

43 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, contra 5, n. 47, 205 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 41).

ses delight in the soul through the affective power (“secundum affectum”).⁴⁴ According to Pecham, when the intellect apprehends something, it generates an act of delight in the will. In relation to the movement of the intellect, the delight of the will constitutes a new, distinct act, which is different from the intellectual act of apprehension. Through this new act, free will can move itself either toward higher or lower things. By receiving a new actuality, free will manifests a self-reflexive power (“potentia in se reflexa”), an unconditioned power (“potentia absoluta”) ensuring its genuine freedom. Hence, free will can choose to move toward evil without constraint from celestial bodies, human beings, demons, or any other entities.⁴⁵ This is because free will is not the mere faculty of the will, but encompasses both will and reason (“non dicit solam voluntatem, sed facultatem eius et rationis”).⁴⁶ In this sense, Pecham affirms that turning or perverting free will is more difficult than merely impeding it.⁴⁷ As the faculty

44 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 5, n. 78, 215 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 42).

45 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 5, n. 78, 215 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 42). On this topic, see also IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, resp. ad ob., n. 7, 13: “Ad obiectum dicendum quod [quando dicitur] ‘dilectionem precedit cognitio, ergo malam mala’, dicendum quod non sequitur. Quoniam duplex est amor, scilicet amor complacentiae et amor concupiscentiae. Secundus praesupponit primum; primus mentem inflat et excaecat; secundus ad aliud desiderandum inclinatur. Amorem igitur concupiscentiae et electionem erroneam precedit error sed non delectationem inordinatam. Quoniam eo ipso quo res innotescit delectabilis est, et nisi compescatur delectatio in immoderationem transit. Amplius non sequitur quod fuerit inordinatio in cognitione sicut nec sequitur ‘pater est causa filii, ergo pater malus causa filii mali’, quia pater non est tota causa filii. Sic in proposito: cognitio non est causa tota motus liberi arbitrii sed dispositio ad ipsum. Liberum autem arbitrium libere habet moveri vel non moveri, etiam post apprehensionem rei. Amplius quamvis amorem precedat cognitio, tamen ‘partum mentis naturaliter precedit appetitus’, ut dicit Augustinus, IX *De Trinitate* in fine. Et ideo movet appetitus intellectum et ad veritatem et ad errorem, tamen electio et malitiae consummatio non est sine immixto errore, quia ‘omnis malus ignorans’ secundum Philosophum.” Considering the date of composition established by Girard Etzkorn, *Quodlibet I* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* are nearly contemporary. Indeed, Pecham’s *Quodlibet I* dates back to the Lent of 1270. On the dating of this text, see ETZKORN 1989, 21*–23*; ETZKORN 2006, 135–137.

46 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 5, n. 78, 215; (for the text, see *supra*, n. 42).

47 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 3, n. 77, 215: “Similiter ad quartum dicendum quod plus est vertere liberum arbitrium quam ipsum penitus impedire, quoniam impediri potest totaliter per ineptitudinem corporis, in quantum intellectus per prius impeditur. Intellectus autem impediri potest per accidens, laeso organo imaginativo. Sed impediri non potest in actu, nisi posito actu suo, et ita idem ponitur destrui et servari. “Nihil igitur potest vertere liberum arbitrium, nisi quod potest attingere ipsum liberum arbitrium secundum se <quod> non potest virtus caelestis.” Also in this case, Etz-

of the rational soul, free will can be impeded only accidentally (*per accidens*) through bodily disposition, particularly if the intellect is obstructed. Such an obstruction may occur when, for example, the organ of imagination is damaged, preventing intellectual activity at its source. However, free will can never be impeded effectively (*in actu*), as that would require the intellect to perform an act of its own, namely, to alter its operation through a voluntary act. Such a scenario would be self-contradictory, as it would entail an act that is simultaneously “destroyed and preserved.”⁴⁸ Consequently, Pecham concludes:

Therefore, nothing can overturn free will except that which can reach free will in itself, which a celestial power cannot do.⁴⁹

In Question 4, Pecham maintains this stance, calling celestial bodies “accidental but imperfect signs” of voluntary events.⁵⁰ Pecham specifies that “celestial bodies are signs only insofar as the will is inclined by nature.” While celestial bodies may affect the will indirectly through their influence on natural events, they can never be said to be direct signs of voluntary acts at all.⁵¹ From this perspective, Pecham interprets the claim that it is dangerous “to wear or undertake something new while the moon is in Leo,” stating that it is only significant in relation to nature and not to the will.⁵²

Later, in his *Tractatus de anima*, written after 1277, Pecham radicalises his position on free will. While in the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*, he describes it as a faculty encompassing both will and reason, in the *Tractatus de anima*, Pecham

korn’s numbering of the argument is mainly wrong; see *supra*, n. 42.

48 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 3, n. 77, 215 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 47).

49 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp. ad 3, n. 77, 215.

50 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 22, 220: “Respectu eventuum voluntariorum sunt signa per accidens, sed imperfecta.”

51 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 25, 221–222: “Respectu vero actuum voluntariorum non sunt signa nisi quatenus voluntas inclinatur a natura. Sicut Mars dum significat super choleram, significat super iram et effectum irae. Si super illa quae voluntatem respiciunt, et nullo modo naturalem significationem habent nec fallibilem nec infallibilem. Unde eiusmodi est illa propositio *Centiloquii* [prop.] 22: ‘Nova vestium ita facere vel exercere, luna exsistente in Leone, timendum est maxime si fuerit impedita’. Cuius ratio est, quoniam impossibile est res significare nisi quae sic conveniunt.”

52 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 25, 222.

specifies that free will is not a third faculty but “the same faculty of rational will to desire or not to desire what is presented to the appetite by reason.”⁵³ He strongly maintains that the will is free “to such a degree” (“adeo”) that it can even withhold consent from practical reason (“ratio practica”).⁵⁴ As Ernst Stadter has pointed out, Pecham’s use of *adeo* is far from being incidental: it underlines both the scope and the strength of free will, which may determine itself even in opposition to the clear judgment of reason.⁵⁵ In articulating his view, Pecham deliberately reinforces his opposition to an intellectualistic account, according to which the intellect impels the will to choose always what reason presents as the greater good. Within such a framework, the will is conceived as a fundamentally passive faculty, constrained to accept what reason had already judged. Even the choice of evil would ultimately be reducible to a preference for an apparent higher good.⁵⁶ Against this determinism, Pecham stresses that free will retains the capacity to act contrary to practical reason. As the highest created faculty, free will cannot be compelled by anything or anyone except God, who alone can infallibly direct it toward the good.⁵⁷ The *Tractatus de anima* thus marks a further step beyond the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*. Here, Pecham advances a more

53 For this definition, see IOHANNES PECHAM 1948, 41: “Liberum vero arbitrium hominis non dicit aliquam tertiam potentiam vel compositam a ratione et voluntate, sed libertas arbitrii est ipsa facultas voluntatis rationalis ad appetendum vel non appetendum illud, quod a ratione appetitui presentatur. In hoc enim differt ab appetitu irrationali, quoniam irrationabilia ea quae appetitui praesentantur, necessario concupiscit vel movetur ad consequendum appetita nisi aliquo terribili repellatur. Sed liberum arbitrium adeo est liberum, quoniam ei, quod ratio practica nuntiat, potest impedire consensum. Vires enim sensitivae omnes sunt carni et organis immersae et ideo coguntur ab obiectis. Intellectus etiam a suo obiecto cogitur, quia est vis passiva; cogitur insuper a talibus veris, in quibus nulla potest esse falsitatis apparentia. Sed liberum arbitrium, quia constituitur in apice creaturarum in ultimo [gradu] creati vigoris a nulla re cogi potest, a solo Deo in melius verti potest. In rebus autem humano visui subiectis utrumque oppositorum libere potest velle.”

54 IOHANNES PECHAM 1948, 41 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 53). On the concept of *consensus* in Pecham, see DE BENEDITTIS 2024.

55 Cf. STADTER 1971, 128–129.

56 On this topic, see HOFFMANN 2011.

57 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 1948, 41 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 53). See also IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl.* IV, q. 21, resp., n. 5, 223: “Hoc autem dico quantum ad iudicium particulare de specialibus personis propter liberum arbitrium, cui solus Deus dominatur”; IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de beat. an. et corp.*, q. 12, resp. ad 10, n. 106, 559: “Ad decimum dicendum per interemptionem, quoniam voluntas seu liberum arbitrium est altissimum sub Deo. Nec movetur ab intellectu proprie et principaliter [...]. Immo principaliter movetur liberum arbitrium a se.”

radical idea of the will as fully and completely free. The deeper reasons behind this doctrinal shift, however, remain to be elucidated.

In conclusion, Pecham's treatment of celestial bodies and free will emphasises a fundamental conviction: free will is the noblest of created faculties, transcending both external determinisms and natural predispositions. Although body and intellect may occasionally condition human beings *per accidens*, the will remains inviolable and retains its self-reflexive power, constituting itself as an unconditioned faculty, immune to direct influence by any created beings, and thus completely free. Only God possesses the capacity to direct the will infallibly toward the good.

3.3 *Celestial bodies and extraordinary events: miracles, fortune, and chance*

Pecham also considers extraordinary events, which, in Question 4, are referred to as *mirabilia*. He distinguishes three types of extraordinary events: those that are genuinely wondrous and miraculous; those that are deceptively wondrous and merely apparent; and those events that occur by chance or fortune.⁵⁸ In all cases, celestial bodies serve as signs given not ordinarily but in a certain manner ("*signa data quodammodo*"), depending on the type of event they signify.⁵⁹

Regarding truly extraordinary and miraculous events, celestial bodies are established as signs given ("*signa data*") in accordance with the natural congruity of signs ("*naturali convenientia signorum*"). Such extraordinary natural events may take place in two ways: either within the ordinary temporal cycles ("*in coniunctione trita temporis discretion*") or in a specific, singular manner ("*in speciali*").⁶⁰ In the former case, these events do not signify merely under the

58 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 26, 222: "Respectu vero mirabilium, distinguendum est. Quia quaedam dicuntur mirabilia triplici ratione. Aut quia vere sunt mirabilia et miracula; aut quia sunt mirabilia fallacia et apparentia, partim quia sunt a casu et fortuna. De quo tertio genere dicit Augustinus, *Contra Academicos* I: 'Nihil in rebus casum vocamus, nisi causa secreta'."

59 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 22, 220: "Respectu eventuum mirabilium principalium sunt signa data quodammodo."

60 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., nn. 27–28, 222: "Igitur, respectu mirabilium primo, scilicet respectu mysteriorum fidei, praecipue credendorum circa incarnationem, sunt signa data, recordante adhuc naturali convenientia signorum, sicut accessus solis citra aequinoctialem significat veri solis approximationem, ut dicit Beda. Sed haec non significant tantum in coniunctione trita temporis discretionem, quia

ordinary temporal sequence, since this mode of signification recurs annually and pertains to both past and future events. Pecham refers to the example of Christ's Incarnation, which, according to Bede, occurred at the spring equinox;⁶¹ in this sense, the approach of the equinox also signifies the coming of Christ as the true Sun.⁶² In the case of extraordinary events that occur *in speciali*, celestial bodies also serve as signs given in a specific, singular manner, since they take place only once and properly signify that particular event. For example, the sun darkening at the time of Christ's Passion happened only at that moment and specifically meant the death of Christ.⁶³

Deceptive and merely apparent wonders ("mirabilia fallacia et apparentia") are attributed to the activity of demons.⁶⁴ In this context, Pecham criticises astrological and magical practices, especially the construction of talismans, statues, and figures ("imagines") at a specific astrological moment,⁶⁵ which can imbue them with properties and powers derived from celestial bodies.⁶⁶ The underlying idea of this practice is that such objects are influenced by the stars, so that the terrestrial events are modelled on celestial configurations. However, accor-

haec significatio quolibet anno praesentatur et significat ita praeteritum sicut futurum. Alio modo significant data ad significandum in speciali, sicut obscuritas solis tempore passionis Domini, quando dixit Ariopagita: 'Quia aut Deus vere patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvetur'. Respectu igitur talium sunt signa caeli data, sed tantum secundum quod in sacris litteris continetur."

61 See BEDA VENERABILIS 1977, 373–374. Bede states that, according to many Church Fathers, Christ was both conceived and suffered on 25 March, that is, on the vernal equinox, which falls eight days before the Kalends of April.

62 On Pecham's use of scientific metaphors to explain theological mysteries, see DE BENEDITTIS 2023. For the broader Franciscan context, see also PANTI 2012; PANTI 2016; PANTI 2018; PANTI 2017; GALLI 2021.

63 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., nn. 27–28, 222 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 60).

64 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 26, 222 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 58).

65 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 29, 222–223: "Item, sunt mirabilia fallacia, quorundam daemonum illusionem procurata, respectu quorum caelestia corpora non sunt signa vera, sed divinitus data, sed diabolica seductione haec dignificare dicuntur. Et sic currat error de imaginibus de quibus dicit nona propositio *Centiloquii*: 'Vultus huius saeculi, inquit, sunt subiecti vultibus caelestibus. Et ideo sapientes qui imagines faciebant stellarum introitum in caelestes imagines inspexerunt,' et tunc ne Scorpionem etc. Quod magice fieri patet per hoc quod non sufficit sola sculptura, sed aliae magicae superstitiones."

66 See, for example, WEILL-PAROT 1999; WEILL-PAROT 2010; LOCONSOLE 2020; CALVET 2018; CRISCIANI 2008; STURLESE 1980; THORNDIKE 1923; PEREIRA 1992.

ding to Pecham, these practices do not originate from God but are the product of diabolical illusions. Those practices, which fall under the category of magic, render celestial bodies not true signs (“signa vera”) but instruments of deception, and for this reason, they must be rejected as superstitious.⁶⁷

Particular emphasis is put on chance or fortune events (“pure accidentalia” or “mere fortuite”). Even in these cases, celestial bodies exert no direct influence beyond establishing conditions that prepare for acts of free will (“disponunt ad actus liberi arbitrii praeparative”).⁶⁸ They cannot constrain the freedom of the will but merely shape the bodily dispositions within which the choice occurs. Thus, celestial bodies operate not through determinate causality or necessity but on the basis of the natural disposition of the body affecting the act of free will. Accordingly, Pecham interprets the claim from the *Centiloquium*, which states that “He shall never be poor or needy whose nativity was under Jupiter,” not as affirming a strict determinism caused by Jupiter but rather as indicating its influence on the natural inclination or predisposition of a human being toward business and prosperity.⁶⁹

Similarly, Question 4 echoes this view, labelling such events *casualia* and reiterating that stars are signs only insofar as they influence the bodily constitution and natural aptitude.⁷⁰ Indeed, Pecham not only appears to recall the same quotation from *Centiloquium* and the same reference to Jupiter, but he also paraphrases what he had already stated in Question 3. In sum, by differentiating miraculous, deceptive, and fortuitous phenomena, Pecham underlined the limited and subordinate role of celestial bodies in both the natural and human

67 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 29, 222–223 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 65). On the condemnation of astrology by Pecham, see *infra*.

68 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 214: “In his autem quae mere fortuite sunt nullam habent necessitatem vel causalitatem nisi in quantum disponunt ad actus liberi arbitrii praeparative. Sicut dicit ille: ‘Numquam erit pauper et inops cuius nativitatis fuit Iupiter’.” Based on the term *fortuite*, I have changed Etzkorn’s edition in this passage, conjecturing *preparative* instead of *preparativos*. See also IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis* q. 3, resp., n. 72, 213 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 23).

69 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 214.

70 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp., n. 30, 223: “Tertio modo, scilicet super casualia. Et non significant nisi quantum ex complexione corporis movent et inclinant ad aptitudinem vel ineptitudinem naturalem, qua quidam nascuntur gratiosi naturaliter, et hoc ex dominio Iovis. Et quia tales faciliter promoventur, putabant antiqui quod Iupiter det fortunam in divitiis et bona fortunae, et sic de aliis.”

sphere. Although they may serve as signs that occur within the natural order, their causality to determine human events remains fundamentally circumscribed.

4. Responding to arguments: related topics in *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*

The *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* provide a valuable insight into John Pecham's engagement with the major intellectual debates of the early 1270s. At the heart of his discussion is the extent to which celestial bodies can be said to exert causal influence on human affairs. Pecham's response is unambiguous: although the stars may operate as causes of natural effects, they can never directly determine human actions. At most, they may function as signs, but such signs remain powerless in relation to the will. This insistence reflects Pecham's broader project of safeguarding the absolute freedom of the will.

In defending the integrity of human freedom, Pecham is drawn into a series of interconnected discussions on necessity, predestination, fate, and providence. He argues that, when understood correctly, even divine predestination and providence are compatible with genuine freedom of the will, rather than necessitating human acts. From this point, his critique of astrology becomes particularly forceful: astrology fails not only because of its epistemic uncertainty, but also because it threatens the very possibility of moral responsibility. Yet, the *Quaestiones de stellis* alone do not fully disclose the aim of Pecham's position. A more comprehensive picture emerges only when they are read in conjunction with his other writings from the same period, especially his *Quodlibeta* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, where similar concerns are developed in greater depth.

4.1 Necessity, divine predestination, fate, and providence

Building on his understanding of celestial bodies as mere signs rather than causal agents, and in responding to the arguments, Pecham turns to two crucial questions. Firstly, he addresses the theological issues of divine predestination and necessity, aiming to clarify how divine predestination operates without imposing deterministic constraints on human freedom. Secondly, this framework

corroborates his sharp critique of astrology, which cannot be considered a proper science but mainly falls under the category of demonic activity.

The rejection of astrological determinism and the justification of divine predestination are already linked in *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*, Question 3. His argument hinges on the distinction between fate (*fatum*) and predestination, a distinction he grounds in the role of divine grace.⁷¹ Predestination operates through grace and thus preserves the freedom of the human will, enabling it either to give or to deny consent. Fate, by contrast, exerts a coercive force: it directs the will without appealing to free choice, compelling consent instead. As Pecham further clarifies in *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, Question 1, the necessity of coercion is opposed to freedom, but the necessity of an unchangeable intention is not. Therefore, God acts voluntarily and, in a certain manner, acts with an unchangeable will, not coerced but freely.⁷² While predestination, through grace, does not involve any form of coercive necessity, fate, precisely because it acts without grace, entails a deterministic necessity.

On this basis, Pecham denies that astral necessity should be understood as fatal necessity, as it can be overcome by grace.⁷³ As elements of the order established by God, the stars cannot be inclined toward evil *ex se*. Unlike the human soul, which has been corrupted by original sin, the stars remain as they were at the moment of creation. Although their influence may affect human affairs, such

71 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 74, 214: “Ad primum dicendum quod predestinatio non excludit liberum arbitrium, quia cum non agat nisi mediante gratia, in potestate est liberi arbitrii consentire vel non consentire. Fatum autem, si hoc modo ageret, consensum non quaereret sed extorqueret.”

72 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de anima*, q. 1, resp., n. 51, 328: “Ad decimum quartum quod necessitas coactionis repugnantis libertati, non autem necessitas immobilis propositi. Ergo Deus voluntarie facit et quodam modo voluntario facit, non coacte sed immobili voluntate.”

73 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 76, 214–215: “Ad obiectum de originali dicendum quod anima carne corrumpitur, quia caro infecta est vitio originis, nec est qualis a Deo creata; tale enim impossibile esset a Deo creari. Stellae autem sunt in institutionis suae ordine; ergo ex se impossibile est eas ad malum inclinare. Dico etiam quod illa non est necessitas fatalis quod potest per gratiam eliminari. Unde Augustinus, *Contra Iulianum* IV:9 ‘Cum vitatae originis mala merita dicamus esse, gratia dicamus parvulum in regnum Dei intrare, quia bonus est Deus; et alium merito non intrare, quia iustus est Deus; et in neutro esse fatum, quia quod vult, facit Deus’. Amplius, quando parvulus factus est adultus, necessario concupiscit, non tamen necessario hoc vel illud, sed aliquid indeterminate, et potest suis pronitatibus obviare.”

an influence is neither absolute nor inescapable. Citing Augustine, Pecham emphasises that whether one considers God's goodness or His justice, there is no place for fate: one child may enter the kingdom of God by grace, while another is excluded because of original sin. The former is saved through divine goodness; the latter is condemned by divine justice. In neither case does fate operate, "because God does what He wills."⁷⁴ Similarly, when a child, having reached adulthood, necessarily experiences concupiscence as a consequence of original sin, this does not compel them to act in a specific way or toward a determinate object; rather, it manifests a general and indeterminate inclination, against which the human being can resist through grace.⁷⁵ Divine grace, therefore, neither suppresses nor overrides human freedom, but instead enables it, allowing a free acceptance or rejection of grace itself. Thus, even in the case of predestination, the integrity of free will is preserved from any form of determinism.

In responding to the second and third arguments of Question 4, Pecham further develops his account, this time specifically referring to divine providence. Drawing on Augustine's *Super Genesim*, Pecham states that "the world is governed by a double providence" ("mundus regitur duplici providentia").⁷⁶ This should not be taken to imply the existence of two distinct divine principles; rather, he distinguishes two modes of divine action, depending on whether providence operates with natural or voluntary things. Augustine's quotation helps dispel any potential ambiguity in Pecham's wording. Concerning natural events, Pecham concedes that providence, acting with nature, impresses a fatal necessity upon bodies through the influence of celestial bodies ("providentiae, quae naturalis est, imprimit fatalem necessitatem corporibus ex corporibus caelestibus").⁷⁷ This, however, cannot be applied to the microcosm, that is, to hu-

74 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 76, 214–215 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 73).

75 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 76, 214–215.

76 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp. ad 2, n. 32, 223: "Ad secundum dicendum quod mundus regitur duplici providentia, ut dicitur *Super Genesim*: 'In isto mundo gemina opera providentiae reperiuntur partim naturalia, partim voluntaria. Naturalis quidem est per occultam Dei administrationem, quae etiam lignis et herbis dat incrementum. Voluntaria vero per angelorum opera et hominum'. Pars ergo providentiae, quae naturalis est, imprimit fatalem necessitatem corporibus ex corporibus caelestibus respectu partium mundi principalium, sed non necessario respectu mundi minoris nisi secundum exigentiam causarum secundarum."

77 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp. ad 2, n. 32, 223.

man affairs, except following secondary causes.⁷⁸ As he explains more explicitly in his *Quodlibet II*, Question 1,⁷⁹ both nature and will are directed to their respective ends by the First Principle. Yet, the order of natural causes toward their end is more infallible than that of voluntary causes, since natural causes are determined to a single effect (“ad unum”), whereas voluntary causes remain open to more than one alternative (“causae autem voluntariae sunt ad utrumlibet”).⁸⁰ In this way, Pecham safeguards the absolute freedom of human beings, even with respect to divine providence. He therefore maintains that the term ‘fate’ is legitimised only insofar as it denotes the effect of providence within this framework. Celestial bodies, accordingly, do not inherently convey determinate or certain information about temporal events, except insofar as they are implicated in causal relations: in itself (“per se”) in relation to natural phenomena, and accidentally (“per accidens”) with respect to human acts.⁸¹

Pecham returns to this issue in *Quodlibet IV*, Question 6, explicitly asking whether predestination imposes necessity on events (*Utrum praedestinatio imponat necessitatem eventui*).⁸² Following Augustine, Pecham distinguishes between

78 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp. ad 2, n. 32, 223.

79 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. II*, q. 1, resp., n. 6, 78: “Quod si loquaris de infallibili praeordinatione predestinati ad vitam aeternam, dico quod in mundo sunt duo genera principiorum, scilicet natura et voluntas, quorum utrumque ordinatur in finem per primum principium. Infallibilior autem est, quantum ad aliquid, ordo causarum naturalium in finem quam voluntariarum, quia causae naturales sunt determinatae ad unum. Causae autem voluntariae sunt ad utrumlibet. Sicut igitur absurdum esset dicere et haereticum, quod Deus de effectibus futuris naturalibus certissime praeordinatis non posset aliter ordinare, verbi gratia, quod non posset proximam pluviam impedire, quam tamen certissimis legibus praeordinavit et certissime praescivit, sic multo magis absurdum est et erroneum dicere quod Deus salvandum praedestinatum non possit non praedestinare vel permittere damnari.”

80 IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. II*, q. 1, resp., n. 6, 78.

81 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 4, resp. ad 3, n. 33, 223: “Ad tertium dicendum quod loquitur de fato secundum quod dicit effectum providentiae secundo modo dictae. Igitur, non habent plus de significatione certa respectu temporis determinati, nisi quantum habent de ratione causalitatis per se, quia super res naturales, vel per accidens super affectus humanos.”

82 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 6, resp., 189: “Sicut patet ex Augustino, V *De civitate*, cap. 10, triplex est necessitas. Est enim necessitas imutabilitatis et immobilitatis, et hoc est in solo Deo qui habet necessitatem imutabilitatis in essendo et immobilitatis in volendo, quia quod vult immobiliter vult. Et sic necessitas non est in creatura, nec est commutabilis creaturae. Immo unum solum est necessarium, ut probat Avicenna; et secundum hoc necessitas dicit vehementiam essendi, ut sit ‘necesse’ idem quod ‘non cessans esse’. – Alia est necessitas inevitabilitatis, ut necesse est hominem mori. – Tertia est

three different forms of necessity: (1) the necessity of immutability and immobility (“necessitas immutabilitatis et immobilitatis”); (2) the necessity of inevitability (“necessitas inevitabilitatis”); and (3) the hypothetical necessity (“necessitas condicionis vel suppositionis”).⁸³

The first form of necessity refers to the impossibility of ceasing to be, described by Pecham as a kind of ontological intensity or “vehemence of being” (“[...] vehementiam essendi”),⁸⁴ which belongs to God alone. Drawing on Avicenna, Pecham asserts that God alone is the only necessary being, possessing the fullness of being, immutable in essence and immovable in will, such that “what He wills, He wills immovably.”⁸⁵

The second form, inevitability, does not find a proper explanation in this context. However, in Distinction 6, Question 1 of Pecham’s *Commentary* on Book I of the *Sentences*, phenomena such as death or hunger are used as examples.⁸⁶ As he explains, such necessity arises from a defect or privation in matter: death results from a defect in the very being of matter, hunger from a defect in its well-being.

The third form, conditional necessity, follows the Boethian distinction between different senses of the term *necessarium*, found in the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, *De syllogismis hypotheticis*, and in the commentary on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*.⁸⁷ Unlike absolute necessity, which stems directly from the cause

necessitas condicionis vel suppositionis, ut te sedere dum sedes, vel te salvari cum Deus vult te salvari.”

83 IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl.* IV, q. 6, resp., 189.

84 IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl.* IV, q. 6, resp., 189 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 82).

85 IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl.* IV, q. 6, resp., 189.

86 See IOHANNES PECHAM, *Commentum super I librum Sententiarum*, d. 6, q. 1, resp., in manuscript Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. G.VIII.454, f. 27^{va} and manuscript Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, VII.C.2, f. 26^{va-b}: “Responsio. Necessario dicitur quadrupliciter secundum quadruplex genus cause. Primo secundum conditionem cause naturalis; et hoc est duplex: quedam ad defectum, sicut necesse habent homines mori et esurire. Primum est defectus in esse, secundum in bene esse et hoc dicitur necessitas inevitabilitatis et a materia (materia enim est in quolibet quo potest esse et non esse ut dicit Philosophus); quedam ad defectus remedium, ut nutrimentum. Unde Augustinus, *De 83 questionibus*, 22 quod: ‘Ubi nulla indigentia, nulla necessitas’, et hec dicitur necessitas indigentie siue immutabilis, ut ubi probabilis ut ubi conditi.” As the critical edition of Pecham’s *Commentary* on Book I of the *Sentences* is currently in preparation, the different meanings of necessity will be examined in greater depth in a forthcoming article.

87 For Boethius’s division, see BININI 2021; BININI 2022, 33–37.

of a thing, conditional necessity depends on a particular condition external to the nature of things. For example, in the statement: “You are sitting when you are seated,” the necessity arises not from human nature but from the condition of actually being seated at that moment.⁸⁸

For Pecham, predestination entails necessity only in its third, conditional sense. Conceived as God’s will to bestow grace, predestination does not imply necessity in the strictest sense, since God necessarily wills only Himself. Nor does it impose an unavoidable necessity upon the predestined, who, considered independently of divine action, remain capable of damnation, even though God prevents this outcome. Necessity arises solely because salvation necessarily follows from predestination, yet this is a necessity of the consequence (*necessitas consequentiae*), not of the consequent (*necessitas consequentis*), leaving the voluntary nature of the will free and intact. Moreover, concerning all that is other than Himself, God can will otherwise without undergoing any change. If He could not ordain differently concerning the predestined, He would be unable to act otherwise than He does, incapable, as Pecham puts it, of preventing the flight of a fly or the fall of rain. But this inference would be incompatible with the doctrine of His absolute power, making this statement not only theologically absurd and heretical but also erroneous from a philosophical point of view.⁸⁹

Therefore, Pecham’s treatment of predestination and necessity reveals a coherent effort to safeguard both divine power and human freedom within a robust theological framework. In this way, Pecham attempts to integrate the doctrine of absolute divine power with a consistent defence of free will, aligning his position with a broader Franciscan rejection of deterministic cosmologies and reinforcing the conviction that the divine order is neither mechanistic nor astrologically bound, but personal, moral, and ultimately grounded in grace.

4.2 Pecham’s critique of the epistemological status of astrology

The second major topic arising from Pecham’s answer is an incisive critique of astrology. For him, the occasional accuracy of some astrological predictions does not prove that astrology qualifies as a proper science. In *Quaestiones dispu-*

⁸⁸ Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 6, resp., 189 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 82).

⁸⁹ On this theme, see also IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. II*, q. 1, 77–81.

tatae de stellis, Question 3,⁹⁰ responding to the fourth counterargument, Pecham insists that astrology cannot be considered scientific because it is founded on experience rather than on true causes.⁹¹ Celestial bodies, he argues, act not as efficient causes in the strict sense but only as disposing causes of events, influencing natural inclinations without determining them.

When astrological predictions seem to come true, Pecham offers two explanations. Firstly, human beings often follow their natural dispositions, which may be shaped by celestial influence. Secondly, and more significantly, demons may act in secret to bring about results that make astrology appear reliable.⁹² Following Augustine,⁹³ Pecham attacks the theory of elections (also known as catarchic astrology), which aims to determine the most favourable and auspicious moment for making a decision, embarking on a venture or taking action. According to Pecham, by calculating the horoscope of a chosen moment, such practices claim to ensure outcomes that align with human wishes, thereby providing a false guarantee of success.⁹⁴

Beyond the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis*, Pecham's critique of astrology also appears in other works, often in connection with his treatment of chance events. In *Quaestiones disputatae de peccato*, Question 1, drawing on Augustine's *Contra Academicos*, Pecham defines chance as the occurrence of events whose causes remain hidden, sometimes because they arise from the covert activity

90 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, n. 46, 205: "Item, omnis ars fundatur super causas naturales et necessarias. Si ergo astrologi praedicunt per artem multa, ergo per causas universales et necessarias; sed fundant considerationes super horam nativitatibus; ergo impressio illius temporis est impressio necessaria." On Etzkorn's wrong numbering of arguments, see *supra*, n. 42.

91 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 215: "Ad quintum: quod astrologia non fundatur super causas, sed super experimenta. Non, inquam, super causas efficientes necessario, quamvis aliquo modo disponentes. Quod autem in talibus vera praedicunt eis erit ex duobus: quia homines sequuntur pronitates suas in maiori parte; item, quod occulta daemonum revolutione. Unde Augustinus *Super Genesim*, II: 'Fatendum est, cum vera praedicuntur, instinctu quodam occultissimo duci, spirituum seductorum'. Et ideo dicitur, V *De civitate* cap. 7."

92 IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 215.

93 On Augustine's thoughts on astrology, see CAMPION 2013; O'LOUGHLIN 1999; PINGREE 1986–1994; BRUNING 1991; FERRARI 1999; FERRARI 1977.

94 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de stellis*, q. 3, resp., n. 73, 215 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 91).

of demons.⁹⁵ The same theme is expanded in *Quodlibet IV*, Questions 20–23, where he examines whether future contingencies can be known with certainty and whether astrological practices can influence human affairs. In Question 20, Pecham asks whether evil angels or demons can know future things with certainty.⁹⁶ He claims that no creature can know future contingencies with certainty unless they are revealed in the divine mirror in which all things are present (“in speculo in quo omnia sunt praesentia”). Since future events do not yet exist in their essence, they lack both effects and defined causes; demons, therefore, cannot know future contingencies intrinsically.⁹⁷ Following Augustine, Pecham

95 See IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de peccato*, q. 1, resp., n. 29, 176: “In talibus ergo Deus agit et permittit. Agit ne improba voluntas in alios erumpat; permittit autem ut in tales praeualeat. Unde Augustinus, *De praedestinatione sanctorum*: ‘Est ergo in malorum potestate peccare, <ut> autem peccando hoc vel hoc illa malitia faciant, non est in eorum potestate, sed Dei dividētis tenebras et ordinantis eas; ut hinc quod faciunt contra voluntatem Dei non fiat nisi voluntas Dei’. Et sic intelligitur illud *II Reg.* 16, 10: *Dimittite eum ut maledicat*. Dominus enim praecepit ei ut malediceret David. Nota exemplum etiam in eventibus fortuitis et casualibus. Unde *I Contra Academicos*: ‘Nihil in rebus casum vocamus nisi cuius ratio vel causa secreta est; nihil que commodi vel incommodi contingit in parte, quod non conveniat iam non congruat universo’.”

96 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 20, resp., n. 4, 220–221: “Secundum sententiam Augustini, libro *De divinatione daemonum* et alibi, daemones futura praecognoscunt quadrupliciter. Uno modo per acrimoniam sensuum suorum per quam vident futura in causis suis vel indiciis. Alio modo cognoscunt futura ex longiturnitate temporis; et similia cognoscunt ex similibus. Tertio modo cognoscunt quae ipsi facturi sunt. Unde Augustinus, *II Super Genesim*: ‘Aliquando nefandi spiritus etiam ipsi facturi sunt velut divinando praedicunt,’ de quo tamen plures mentiuntur. Item, praecognoscunt aliquando aliqua ex revelatione spirituum bonorum, quae fit aliquando ipsis daemonibus immediate, aliquando fit sanctis hominibus et daemones aliquo modo ab eis explorant sibi revelata. Unde Augustinus, *De civitate*, cap. 22: ‘Angeli sancti temporalia et mutabilia noverunt, quia eorum principales causas in Verbo Dei conspiciunt; daemones autem non aeternas temporum causas et quodammodo cardinales in Dei sapientia contemplantur, sed quorumdam signorum nobis occultorum maiori experientia multo plura quam homines futura propiciunt, dispositionesque suas aliquando praenuntiant; denique saepe isti, numquam omnino illi falluntur’. Item, Augustinus, *II Super Genesim* in fine: ‘Daemonibus quaedam de temporalibus vera scire permittitur partim suorum sensuum acumine, partim experientiae calliditate propter tam magnam longitudinem vitae, partim sanctis angelis quod ipsi ab omnipotente Deo discunt etiam iussu eius sibi revelantibus, qui merita humana occultissimae iustitiae sinceritate distribuit’. Haec Augustinus.”

97 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 21, resp., n. 5, 223: “Futura autem contingentia nulla creatura certitudinaliter scire potest, nisi ostendatur sibi in speculo in quo omnia sunt praesentia. Quod patet sic: res nescitur nisi per essentiam suam vel per effectum suum vel per causam suam. Futura autem contingentia non sunt essentialiter, sed futura sunt, et certum est per consequens quod nullum effectum habent. Item, nec habent causam determinatam in natura. Nihil ergo talium potest scire diabolus, nisi forte illa quae, si Deus permisit, est ipse facturus, et hoc etiam posset oratio unius hominis sancti impedire.

lists four ways in which demons may appear to foresee future events: (1) by acute perception of signs already present in causes; (2) through their extended temporal existence, which allows them to infer outcomes from recurring patterns and analogies; (3) by foreknowledge of their own future intentions; and (4) by revelations from good spirits. Even in these cases, such knowledge remains conjectural.⁹⁸

Demons may, however, create the illusion of predictive power by employing various stratagems.⁹⁹ As Pecham notes in Question 23, demons “can trouble the rational soul in a variety of ways,” manipulating species, *phantasmata*, thoughts, and even dreams. Such impressions may lodge in the body and produce a habitual disposition in the soul. Depending on the will of the agent, these impressions can implant thoughts and dreams, inflaming either the imaginative faculty, the flesh, or the bodily humours. In this way, a human being possessed by demons may at times utter truths beyond the reach of the senses, but this remains an effect produced by an occult mingling of the demoniac spirits and the possessed human being.¹⁰⁰ The occult interaction can prompt speech or actions that seem prophetic but are the result of demonic influence.

The link between demonic manipulation and the impossibility of certain foreknowledge forms the theological framework for Pecham’s wider rejection of astrology. In Question 21, he cites four propositions from the *Centiloquium*: (1) all judgments from the stars fall between necessity and contingency; (2) astrologers should speak in general terms and never make definitive predictions; (3) astrological science depends not only on celestial influence but also on the interpretation of astrologers; and (4) a wise man should govern astral determinations rather than submit to them. For Pecham, these points clearly reveal astrology’s epistemic instability: it is conjectural, dependent on human interpretation, and not based on demonstrative causality.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, astrology cannot yield certain predictions about a human being. Apparent successes occur only when

Causa autem omnia repraesentans Deus est. Nulla creatura potest aliquid scire futurorum contingentium nisi sibi ab illo speculo revelentur in quo omnium causae refulgent.”

98 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 20, resp., n. 4, 220–221 (for the text, see *supra*, n. 96).

99 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 21, resp., nn. 4–5, 222–223.

100 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 23, resp., 225–226.

101 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 21, resp., nn. 4–5, 222–223.

demons arrange events to match predictions, fostering false correspondences between constellation and outcomes. Thus, when the *Centiloquium* warns that it is dangerous “to wear or undertake something new while the moon is in Leo” or claims that “someone who was born with Saturn at midheaven and certain other aspects will die in a collapse,” Pecham dismisses these statements as neither rational nor truly causal, but the product of demonic orchestration. Hence, when astrologers offer astonishingly accurate predictions, it is due to the secret prompting of spirits. From this perspective, human free will actually remains free and under the government of God alone, untouched by astral determinism. The same principle invalidates all occult arts, such as pyromancy, aeromancy, hydromancy, geomancy, necromancy, or other forms of “magical madness” (“in similibus magicis deliramentis”). As he notes, if the noblest of bodies, namely the stars, cannot provide scientific certainty about future contingencies, then *a fortiori* (“multo magis”) such certainty cannot come from other lesser bodies or elements.¹⁰²

In sum, Pecham rejects astrology as a science because it lacks knowledge of true causality and rational foundation, rests on conjecture, and is susceptible to the covert influence of demons. These defects render its claims inherently uncertain: what is foretold may or may not occur, and only God’s will determines the outcome.

5. A mere coincidence?

The *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* appear to engage with no fewer than four of the prepositions condemned by Tempier in 1270,¹⁰³ at least indirectly. In particular, Questions 3 and 4 reveal a notable proximity to the thesis and doctrines officially censured only a few weeks before the discussion and publication of Pecham’s writing. On multiple occasions, Pecham emphasises the absolute freedom of the will, an issue that becomes the central concern of his discussion.

102 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. IV*, q. 21, resp., n. 4, 223: “Si igitur in illis corporalibus nobilissimis non est certitudo scientialis de futuris contingentibus, multo magis nec erit in aliis corporibus, ut in igne secundum pyromantiam vel aere secundum aeromantiam vel aqua secundum hydromantiam vel terra secundum geomantiam vel in cadaveribus secundum necromantiam vel in similibus magicis deliramentis.”

103 For the entire list of the theses condemned by Tempier on 10 December 1270, see DENIFLE 1889, I, n. 432, 486–487.

While this theme recurs frequently in many of his writings, the *Quaestiones disputatae de stellis* constitute the only work in which Pecham directly relates it to the influence of celestial bodies. In this light, his argumentation invites comparison with Articles 3 and 4 of the condemnation, which reject the claim that “[t]he human will wills and chooses by necessity” (“*Quod voluntas hominis ex necessitate vult et eligit*”) and that “[a]ll the things belonging to the lesser world are subject to the necessity of celestial bodies” (“*Quod omnia, que hic in inferioribus aguntur, subsunt necessitati corporum celestium*”). Similarly, in responding to the third and fifth arguments, Pecham emphasises both the operation and the nature of free will, defining it as a self-reflexive power capable of choosing even evil. This position stands in direct continuity to Article 9 of Tempier’s condemnation, which censures the claim that “free will is a passive potency of the soul, rather than an active potency, and it is moved by necessity toward its object” (“*Quod liberum arbitrium est potentia passiva, non activa; et quod de necessitate moveatur ab appetibili*”). Article 12, which rejects the denial of divine governance over human acts (“*Quod humani actus non reguntur providentia Dei*”), also finds some correspondence in Pecham’s doctrine of predestination and providence.¹⁰⁴

This may not be a mere coincidence, which becomes all the more clear when Pecham’s other writings of this period are compared with other theses that were condemned in 1270. For example, Article 1, which censures the Averroistic thesis that all human beings share a single, numerically identical intellect, finds a parallel in Pecham’s *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, Question 5 (*Utrum sit unus intellectus in omnibus hominibus*), where he explicitly refutes the notion of a universal intellect.¹⁰⁵ Articles 5 and 6, rejecting the eternity of the world and the existence of a first human being, correspond to Pecham’s *Quaestiones de aeternitate mundi*, Question 2 (*Utrum mundus potuit fieri ab aeterno*).¹⁰⁶ Likewise, in *Quodlibet III*, Question 8 (*Utrum anima rationalis damnata patiatur ab igne materiali imaginative tantum an vere*),¹⁰⁷ Pecham addresses the doctrine that the soul, once separated from the body, can suffer from material fire, which is precisely the thesis

104 DENIFLE 1889, vol. 1, n. 432, 486–487.

105 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de an.*, q. 5, 565–391. Cf. also DALES 1995, 126–132; COLLEY 2016, 77–118.

106 Cf. IOHANNES PECHAM 2002, *Quaest. disp. de aet. mundi*, q. 2, 578–594. See also DALES 1990, 120–128.

107 See IOHANNES PECHAM 1989, *Quodl. III*, q. 8, 148–150.

condemned in Article 7. Although Pecham does not directly cite any of the articles included in Tempier's list, the substantial overlap between their respective targets suggests that his disputations from this period may be interpreted, at least in part, as a deliberate intellectual alignment with the theological boundaries that Tempier sought to defend. In this light, Pecham's Parisian academic production emerges not merely as an exercise in academic disputation but as an active contribution to the consolidation of a theological and philosophical front against views that were considered heterodox. Such thematic convergences cannot, in themselves, establish a direct connection between Pecham's works and Tempier's censure, but they show that both responded to shared intellectual challenges circulating in Paris in the early 1270s. Nevertheless, the striking proximity in date and place, the marked overlap of certain doctrinal concerns, and the dissemination of these themes among Pecham's inner circle¹⁰⁸ strongly suggest that John Pecham might have played a bigger role in the events of 1270.

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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO*

108 The diffusion of these themes among Pecham's disciples in the immediate aftermath of the 1270 condemnation confirms their centrality for Pecham. Already in 1271–1272, for example, William of Falegar engaged the question of the eternity of the world (*Quaestiones de productione rerum*, qq. 1–3) and the unity of the soul (*Quaestiones de anima*, q. 1). Roger Marston, in Paris between 1269 and 1271, opened his *Quodlibet I* with the question *Utrum Deus possit facere creaturam aliquam sibi coaeternam*. Similar concerns are also evident in Matthew of Acquasparta. See GONDRAS 1972; ROGERUS MARSTON 1968, 3–9; DALES 1990, 129–132.

* francesco.debenedittis@unimi.it; Università degli Studi di Milano, Dipartimento di Filosofia Piero Martinetti, Via Festa del Perdono 7, 20122 Milano MI, Italy. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1571-2684>.

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