

Abstract

Written probably around the end of the 60s of the 13th century, Ulrich's 'De summo bono' can be rightly defined as a work of philosophical theology, for it deliberately conciliates philosophical rationality with theological wisdom and mixes philosophical with theological subjects. Aside from all the specific conceptual and doctrinal disagreements, it is this conception of the relationship between philosophy and theology that marks the radical difference from his master Albert.

Yet, the great originality of Ulrich's only surviving work does not stop there. Paradoxically, the constant recourse to Albert's writings is by no means a sign of Ulrich's total dependence on his master, but only the epiphenomenon of a new intellectual undertaking. The passages taken from Albert's writings are freely adapted, combined, managed, interpreted, manipulated. In other words, Ulrich's summa is not an anthology of texts slavishly copied, but a complex work that offers two interrelated levels of understanding.

At the doctrinal level, it is the work of an *auctor* that puts forth not only incidental personal views, but a comprehensive and coherent conception of the world and a theory of the epistemological status and relationship of the branches of knowledge. The doctrine of fate, which is part of this general system of thought, provides a clear example of Ulrich's relevance as an autonomous thinker. His views on providence, celestial causality and contingency were indeed an original contribution to the debates on fate and related issues which were taking place in the second half of the 13th century.

Given the textual relationship with Albert's texts, 'De summo bono' also has an undeniable hermeneutical value, for it is a key to understanding Albert's works. In this regard, Ulrich develops a multifaceted exegetical approach by reorganizing, reinterpreting and correcting Albert's texts. The cases that have been examined (i.e., the substitution of Empedocles with Antiphon and the complex strategy regarding angelic apparitions) are representative of what can be called a 'manipulative' interpretation.