

WIMMER LECTURE: RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY AND THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION. pdf

1: Scholasticism - Wikipedia

Renaissance Philosophy and the Mediaeval Tradition § Paul Oskar Kristellar's talk, *Renaissance Philosophy and the Mediaeval Tradition*, was given as part of the Wimmer Memorial Lecture Series at Saint Vincent in , and was published two years later.

Reformed scholasticism Following the Reformation, Calvinists largely adopted the scholastic method of theology, while differing regarding sources of authority and content of theology. Neo-scholasticism The revival and development from the second half of the 19th century of medieval scholastic philosophy is sometimes called neo- Thomism. Thomistic Scholasticism[edit] As J. Repeated legislation of the General Chapters, beginning after the death of St. Thomas, as well as the Constitutions of the Order, required all Dominicans to teach the doctrine of St. Thomas both in philosophy and in theology. It focuses not only on exegesis of the historical Aquinas but also on the articulation of a rigorous system of orthodox Thomism to be used as an instrument of critique of contemporary thought. Due to its suspicion of attempts to harmonize Aquinas with non-Thomistic categories and assumptions, Scholastic Thomism has sometimes been called "Strict Observance Thomism". Partly, this was because this branch of Thomism had become a quest to understand the historical Aquinas after the Second Vatican Council. Still, those who had learned Scholastic philosophy continued to have unresolved questions about how the insights of the medieval synthesis could be applied to contemporary problems. This conversation departed from the academic environment and entered internet discussion groups such as Aquinas, [25] Christian Philosophy, [26] and Thomism, [27] and websites such as Open Philosophy, [28] where it continues today. Analytical Scholasticism[edit] A renewed interest in the "scholastic" way of doing philosophy has recently awoken in the confines of the analytic philosophy. Attempts emerged to combine elements of scholastic and analytic methodology in pursuit of a contemporary philosophical synthesis. Analytical Thomism can be seen as a pioneer part of this movement. It was thought that the best way to achieve this was by replicating the discovery process *modus inveniendi*. By reading it thoroughly and critically, the disciples learned to appreciate the theories of the author. Other documents related to the book would be referenced, such as Church councils, papal letters and anything else written on the subject, be it ancient or contemporary. The points of disagreement and contention between multiple sources would be written down in individual sentences or snippets of text, known as *sententiae*. Once the sources and points of disagreement had been laid out through a series of dialectics , the two sides of an argument would be made whole so that they would be found to be in agreement and not contradictory. Of course, sometimes opinions would be totally rejected, or new positions proposed. This was done in two ways. The first was through philological analysis. Words were examined and argued to have multiple meanings. It was also considered that the auctor might have intended a certain word to mean something different. Ambiguity could be used to find common ground between two otherwise contradictory statements. The second was through logical analysis, which relied on the rules of formal logic "as they were known at the time" to show that contradictions did not exist but were subjective to the reader. Scholastic instruction[edit] Scholastic instruction consisted of several elements. The first was the *lectio*: This was followed by the *meditatio* meditation or reflection in which students reflected on and appropriated the text. Finally, in the *quaestio* students could ask questions *quaestiones* that might have occurred to them during *meditatio*. Eventually the discussion of *quaestiones* became a method of inquiry apart from the *lectio* and independent of authoritative texts. *Disputationes* were arranged to resolve controversial *quaestiones*. In this case, the teacher responded and the students rebutted; [31] on the following day the teacher, having used notes taken during the disputation, summarised all arguments and presented his final position, riposting all rebuttals. Arguments for the position taken would be presented in turn, followed by arguments against the position, and finally the arguments against would be refuted. This method forced scholars to consider opposing viewpoints and defend their own arguments against them.

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2: Lecture The Medieval World View

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Continuities[edit] The structure, sources, method, and topics of philosophy in the Renaissance had much in common with those of previous centuries. These areas provided the structure for the philosophy curriculum of the emerging universities. During the Renaissance too, many thinkers saw these as the main philosophical areas, with logic providing a training of the mind to approach the other three. Sources of philosophy[edit] A similar continuity can be seen in the case of sources. The latter, similar in some ways to modern debates, examined the pros and cons of particular philosophical positions or interpretations. This style of philosophy continued to have a strong following in the Renaissance. Topics in philosophy[edit] Given the remarkable range of Aristotelian philosophy , it was possible to discuss all kinds of issues in medieval and Renaissance philosophy. Aristotle had treated directly problems such as the trajectory of missiles, the habits of animals, how knowledge is acquired, the freedom of the will, how virtue is connected with happiness, the relationship of the lunar and the sublunar worlds. Indirectly he had stimulated discussion on two points that were particularly of concern to Christians: All of these continued to be of considerable interest to Renaissance thinkers, but we shall see that in some cases the solutions offered were significantly different because of changing cultural and religious landscapes. The same outline as above will be used, to show that within trends of continuity one can also find surprising differences. Sources of philosophy[edit] It is therefore useful to reconsider what was mentioned above about philosophical sources. The Renaissance saw a significant broadening of source material. Plato, known directly only through two and a half dialogues in the Middle Ages, came to be known through numerous Latin translations in fifteenth century Italy, culminating in the hugely influential translation of his complete works by Marsilio Ficino in Florence in Petrarch was also a great admirer of Roman poets such as Virgil and Horace and of Cicero for Latin prose writing. Other movements from ancient philosophy also re-entered the mainstream. This was never really the case for Epicureanism, which was almost always caricatured and considered with suspicion, but Scepticism and Pyrrhonism did make a comeback thanks to writers like Michel Montaigne , and the movement of Stoicism made an impressive re-appearance in the writings of Justus Lipsius. Structure of philosophy[edit] While generally the Aristotelian structure of the branches of philosophy stayed in place, interesting developments and tensions were taking place within them. In moral philosophy, for instance, a position consistently held by Thomas Aquinas and his numerous followers was that its three subfields ethics, economics, politics were related to progressively wider spheres the individual, the family and the community. Politics, Thomas thought, is more important than ethics because it considers the good of the greater number. He insisted, for instance, on the value of the practical aspects of ethics. Method of philosophy[edit] If, as mentioned above, scholasticism continued to flourish, the Italian humanists i. As we have seen, they believed that philosophy could be brought under the wing of rhetoric. They also thought that the scholarly discourse of their time needed to return to the elegance and precision of its classical models. They therefore tried dressing philosophy in a more appealing garb than had their predecessors, whose translations and commentaries were in technical Latin and sometimes simply transliterated the Greek. The driving conviction was that philosophy should be freed of its technical jargon so that more people would be able to read it. At the same time, all kinds of summaries, paraphrases, and dialogues dealing with philosophical issues were prepared, in order to give their topics a wider dissemination. Humanists also encouraged the study of Aristotle and other writers of antiquity in the original. Desiderius Erasmus , the great Dutch humanist, even prepared a Greek edition of Aristotle, and eventually those teaching philosophy in the universities had to at least pretend that they knew Greek. Humanists were not, however, great fans of the vernacular. Once it had been determined, however, that Italian was a language with literary merit and that it could carry the weight of philosophical discussion, numerous efforts in this direction started

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to appear, particularly from the 1500s onward. Alessandro Piccolomini had a programme to translate or paraphrase the entire Aristotelian corpus into the vernacular. This rise of vernacular philosophy, which quite predated the Cartesian approach, is a new field of research whose contours are only now beginning to be clarified. We know that debates about the freedom of the will continued to flare up for instance, in the famous exchanges between Erasmus and Martin Luther, that Spanish thinkers were increasingly obsessed with the notion of nobility, that duelling was a practice that generated a large literature in the sixteenth century was it permissible or not? In fact, the most successful compendium of natural philosophy in the period *Compendium philosophiae naturalis*, first published in 1591 was authored by Frans Titelmans, a Franciscan friar from the Low Countries whose work has a very strong religious flavour. In other words, religion had a massive importance in the period, and one can hardly study philosophy without remembering this. This is true among others for the philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, who reinterpreted Plato in the light of his early Greek commentators and also of Christianity. Ficino hoped that a purified philosophy would bring about a religious renewal in his society and therefore transformed distasteful aspects of Platonic philosophy for instance, the homosexual love exalted in the *Symposium* into spiritual love. In conclusion, like any other moment in the history of thought Renaissance philosophy cannot be considered to have provided something entirely new nor to have continued for centuries to repeat the conclusions of its predecessors. At the same time, we realize that every reappropriation is constrained and even guided by contemporary concerns and biases. It was no different for the period considered here:

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3: Renaissance Humanism

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Lecture 24 The Medieval World View For the most part, it can be said that great thinkers lead two lives. Their first life occurs while they are busy at work in their earthly garden. But there is also a second life which begins the moment their life ceases and continues as long as their ideas and conceptions remain powerful. In the history of the western intellectual tradition -- a tradition reaching back to the pre-Socratic philosophers of Ionia -- there have always been great thinkers who have attempted to explain the nature and scope of human knowledge. Toward the end of the 18th century, a German idealist philosopher published a number of important philosophical treatises -- treatises which he called critiques. The great question which plagued Kant, as well as all philosophers before or after him, was this: This is an epistemological question and is often joined by other questions: What can we know? What does it mean to know something? There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. This, of course, is the credo of the empiricist. John Locke was an empiricist. So too were Galileo, and Isaac Newton. In fact, most scientists are empiricists by nature. This should tell you something. It was Locke who, in the late 17th century, argued that the human mind was a tabula rasa, a blank slate upon which experience records itself as knowledge. What you see is what you get. For Alfred North Whitehead, "the point is, that an elephant, when present, is noticed. But Locke was a rather "modern" empiricist. One of the first empiricists was Aristotle. Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great. Aristotle had also been the pupil of Plato. Plato, simply stated, believed that universal ideas of things -- like justice, beauty, truth -- had an objective existence all their own. What this means is that these things existed whether men perceived apprehended them or not. They had an independent reality which Plato believed men could come to grasp as knowledge. These ideas exist a priori, that is, they exist prior to experience and hence, transcend experience. For Plato, our senses are deceptive and what we experience in our daily lives is not reality but the shadow of reality. This philosophical school has come to be known as rationalism. So, between Plato and Aristotle. For years, philosophers had to choose whether they followed Plato and his rationalism, or Aristotle and his empiricism. Indeed, Plato comes off as the first philosopher and Aristotle as his first critic. As Whitehead wrote in *Process and Reality* The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. Now, getting back to Kant. This single act secured for this solitary Lutheran philosopher a central place in the western intellectual tradition. This much said, however, a synthetic act was created much earlier using different philosophical tools but with an end result whose ramifications were no less profound. By the end of the 13th century, Christianity had become the world view of medieval Europe. But Christianity -- especially a Christianity as interpreted by its institutional form, the Church -- was always confronted by challenges. One such challenge was Human Reason -- a capacity to think which had been discovered by the Greeks, accepted by the Romans, but which had been labeled pagan by centuries of intellectual arrogance on the part of the Church Fathers. The Church Fathers -- Origen, St. Augustine -- sought to explain the Holy Writ through Revelation and Faith alone. But, they soon realized that they needed the classical authors to aid them in their writing. So, men like Plato or Cicero. Aquinas recognized this and sought reconciliation. But instead of uniting two philosophical traditions as Kant was to do in the 18th century, Aquinas joined two methods. Reason was no longer conceived as the nemesis of Faith. Neither was Philosophy the enemy of Theology. Instead, Aquinas joined the two by claiming that both were paths to a single truth: Before we turn to the synthesis of Aquinas, it is necessary to examine the historical context from which this synthesis appeared. By the end of the 12th century there were signs of a widespread awakening and progress felt across Europe. For instance, the lords of the manor were learning to make better use of their serfs. They did this by emancipating them and so from this point on the

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serfs were now called peasants. Peasants were no longer tied to the land by labor obligations owed to the lord. Now, they paid rent instead. Meanwhile, suburbs began to appear around older cities and hundreds of new villages sprang into being. Overall, European society was becoming more diversified and life was beginning to hold more comforts. And in terms of intellectual history, this period has come to be characterized as the 12th Century Renaissance. All across northern Europe and England, peasants were freed from labor obligations and were now offered land -- for rent -- under very attractive terms. Peasants expanded into new territories. They leveled forests and drained swamps wherever they went. The peasants also had better tools at their disposal. The plough was now in general use, wind mills were more common and the land seemed to be yielding more. Despite numerous setbacks, the peasantry of northern Europe slowly recognized that a three field system of crop rotation would yield more than the older two field system. The bottom line is this -- peasants were better fed, less afraid of famine and could now raise more children because the land could support a larger, or at least growing, population. And the peasants did raise more children for one of the signs of increased economic prosperity was at the same time an increase in the population. In areas where peasants normally congregated, villages became towns and towns became cities. A process of urbanization was under way -- a process which the Romans had to abandon in the 3rd century under the pressures of barbarian invasion. Rome was a specifically urban civilization. The Romans liked their cities and the conveniences the city offered. But by the 4th century at the latest, this began to change as Germanic tribes moved south of the Danube River, deeper and deeper into the heart of the Roman Empire. With the final collapse of the Empire in the 5th century Germanic tribes were everywhere. Not only did they bring their language, religions and customs, they also brought with them a preference for the open country and a general distaste for anything civilized. So, between the 5th century and the 11th century, the urban civilization of the former Roman Empire declined. The process of urbanization would not begin anew until the 11th century at the earliest. One of the reasons why this is so is that the threat of barbarian migration began to subside. And the reason this took place was that slowly but surely, the chieftains of the barbarian tribes were converted to Christianity. And once a chieftain was converted, so too were his people converted as an act of homage and loyalty. The economic factors of renewed urbanization affected all orders of European society. However, it was the European peasantry who reaped the fewest benefits of this progress. Just the same, landlords were now making less demands on the peasantry. Peasants could rent land to which they could direct all their energy. They could also pass this land on to their sons. In other words, a degree of liberty had begun to infiltrate the world of the European peasant. While the peasants roughed out their lives in the countryside, there were artisans who inhabited towns and cities. As craftsmen and shopkeepers, builders and tradesmen, they had the potential to spread the fruits of their labor over a wider market, a market stretching from the North Sea to North Africa and from Constantinople to Lisbon. In the towns of Italy -- especially port towns like Genoa, Pisa and Venice -- a passion for money-making resulted in what would eventually become a genuinely capitalist society. It was in Italy that the commercial practices and attitudes so characteristic of later ages first emerged. Italian merchants learned how to change money, they perfected double-entry bookkeeping, and they formed trading associations in order to protect their mercantile interests. So, by the 13th century, there existed a bourgeois mentality characterized by the spirit of entrepreneurial risk taking, the pursuit of gain and with all that, the demand for greater political freedom. However, although we can locate a growing bourgeois mentality, there is at this time no evidence of a nascent bourgeois culture -- that again would come with time. The ruling orders were also changing fast. The nobility were the men who reaped the most benefits from the emancipation of the serfs and the subsequent increase in agricultural productivity. With improved productivity, the nobility could now collect higher rents and obtain greater profits from the sale of surplus agricultural goods. And while the nobility clearly made more money, they were always quick to find new and quicker ways to spend it. So, they began to improve their castles -- castles became larger and more elaborate. They sought out better armor and weapons. The artisans of the growing towns and cities, now joined together in cooperatives known as guilds, were only too happy to supply the nobility with whatever it was they needed. And while the nobility built bigger and more impenetrable

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castles, and obtained the best in armor and weaponry, they also began to dress in finer clothes which the merchants of the cities, now also members of their own guilds, brought to them. Many members of the nobility across Europe sought a refinement of life.

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The unity of truth
The Renaissance and Byzantine learning: Italian Humanism and Byzantium
Byzantine and Western Platonism in the fifteenth century
Wimmer lecture: Renaissance philosophy and the medieval tradition
Appendix: History of Philosophy and history of ideas.

References and Further Reading 1. Aristotelianism Improved access to a great deal of previously unknown literature from ancient Greece and Rome was an important aspect of Renaissance philosophy. The renewed study of Aristotle, however, was not so much because of the rediscovery of unknown texts, but because of a renewed interest in texts long translated into Latin but little studied, such as the *Poetics*, and especially because of novel approaches to well-known texts. From the early fifteenth century onwards, humanists devoted considerable time and energy to making Aristotelian texts clearer and more precise. The availability of these new interpretative tools had a great impact on the philosophical debate. Moreover, in the four decades after, the Aristotelian interpretations of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Ammonius, Philoponus, Simplicius, and other Greek commentators were added to the views of Arabic and medieval commentators, stimulating new solutions to Aristotelian problems and leading to a wide variety of interpretations of Aristotle in the Renaissance period. Among the defenders of his theory that there is only one intellect for all human beings, we find Paul of Venice d. Two other Renaissance Aristotelians who expended much of their philosophical energies on explicating the texts of Averroes are Nicoletto Vernia d. They are noteworthy characters in the Renaissance controversy about the immortality of the soul mainly because of the remarkable shift that can be discerned in their thought. Many Renaissance Aristotelians read Aristotle for scientific or secular reasons, with no direct interest in religious or theological questions. Pietro Pomponazzi, one of the most important and influential Aristotelian philosophers of the Renaissance, developed his views entirely within the framework of natural philosophy. In his view, no such activity can be found because the highest activity of the intellect, the attainment of universals in cognition, is always mediated by sense impression. Therefore, based solely on philosophical premises and Aristotelian principles, the conclusion is that the entire soul dies with the body. In, he completed *De naturalium effectuum causis sive de incantationibus* *On the Causes of Natural Effects or On Incantations*, whose main target was the popular belief that miracles are produced by angels and demons. He excluded supernatural explanations from the domain of nature by establishing that it is possible to explain those extraordinary events commonly regarded as miracles in terms of a concatenation of natural causes. Another substantial work is *De fato, de libero arbitrio et de praedestinatione* *Five Books on Fate, Free Will and Predestination*, which is regarded as one of the most important works on the problems of freedom and determinism in the Renaissance. Pomponazzi considers whether the human will can be free, and he considers the conflicting points of view of philosophical determinism and Christian theology. His goal was the retrieval of the genuine Aristotelian concepts of science and scientific method, which he understood as the indisputable demonstration of the nature and constitutive principles of natural beings. He developed the method of *regressus*, a combination of the deductive procedures of composition and the inductive procedures of resolution that came to be regarded as the proper method for obtaining knowledge in the theoretical sciences. Among his main works are the collected logical works *Opera logica*, which are mainly devoted to the theory of demonstration, and his major work on natural philosophy, *De rebus naturalibus*. There were also forms of Aristotelian philosophy with strong confessional ties, such as the branch of Scholasticism that developed on the Iberian Peninsula during the sixteenth century. Their most important writings were in the areas of metaphysics and philosophy of law. Humanism The humanist movement did not eliminate older approaches to philosophy, but contributed to change them in important ways, providing new information and new methods to the field. Humanists called for a radical change of philosophy and uncovered older texts that multiplied and hardened current philosophical discord. Some of the most salient features of humanist reform are the accurate study of texts in the original languages, the preference for ancient authors

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and commentators over medieval ones, and the avoidance of technical language in the interest of moral suasion and accessibility. Humanists stressed moral philosophy as the branch of philosophical studies that best met their needs. They addressed a general audience in an accessible manner and aimed to bring about an increase in public and private virtue. Regarding philosophy as a discipline allied to history, rhetoric, and philology, they expressed little interest in metaphysical or epistemological questions. Logic was subordinated to rhetoric and reshaped to serve the purposes of persuasion. One of the seminal figures of the humanist movement was Francesco Petrarca. In *De sui ipsius et multorum aliorum ignorantia* On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others, he elaborated what was to become the standard critique of Scholastic philosophy. One of his main objections to Scholastic Aristotelianism is that it is useless and ineffective in achieving the good life. Moreover, to cling to a single authority when all authorities are unreliable is simply foolish. Petrarca returned to a conception of philosophy rooted in the classical tradition, and from his time onward, when professional humanists took interest in philosophy, they nearly always concerned themselves with ethical questions. Among those he influenced were Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, and others. One of the most original and important humanists of the Quattrocento was Lorenzo Valla. His most influential writing was *Elegantiae linguae Latinae* Elegances of the Latin Language, a handbook of Latin language and style. He is also famous for having demonstrated, on the basis of linguistic and historical evidence, that the so-called Donation of Constantine, on which the secular rule of the papacy was based, was an early medieval forgery. His main philosophical work is *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* Reploughing of Dialectic and Philosophy, an attack on major tenets of Aristotelian philosophy. The first book deals with the criticism of fundamental notions of metaphysics, ethics, and natural philosophy, while the remaining two books are devoted to dialectics. Throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, humanists were unanimous in their condemnation of university education and their contempt for Scholastic logic. Humanists such as Valla and Rudolph Agricola, whose main work is *De inventione dialectica* On Dialectical Invention, set about to replace the Scholastic curriculum, based on syllogism and disputation, with a treatment of logic oriented toward the use of persuasion and topics, a technique of verbal association aiming at the invention and organization of material for arguments. According to Valla and Agricola, language is primarily a vehicle for communication and debate, and consequently arguments should be evaluated in terms of how effective and useful they are rather than in terms of formal validity. Accordingly, they subsumed the study of the Aristotelian theory of inference under a broader range of forms of argumentation. This approach was taken up and developed in various directions by later humanists, such as Mario Nizolio, Juan Luis Vives, and Petrus Ramus. Vives was a Spanish-born humanist who spent the greater part of his life in the Low Countries. He aspired to replace the Scholastic tradition in all fields of learning with a humanist curriculum inspired by education in the classics. In 1531, he published *In Pseudodialecticos* Against the Pseudodialecticians, a satirical diatribe against Scholastic logic in which he voices his opposition on several counts. A detailed criticism can be found in *De disciplinis* On the Disciplines, an encyclopedic work divided into three parts: Another area in which Vives enjoyed considerable success was psychology. His reflections on the human soul are mainly concentrated in *De anima et vita* On the Soul and Life, a study of the soul and its interaction with the body, which also contains a penetrating analysis of the emotions. Ramus was another humanist who criticized the shortcomings of contemporary teaching and advocated a humanist reform of the arts curriculum. In 1575, he published *Dialecticae partitiones* The Structure of Dialectic, which in its second edition was called *Dialecticae institutiones* Training in Dialectic, and *Aristotelicae animadversiones* Remarks on Aristotle. These works gained him a reputation as a virulent opponent of Aristotelian philosophy. He considered his own dialectics, consisting of invention and judgment, to be applicable to all areas of knowledge, and he emphasized the need for learning to be comprehensible and useful, with a particular stress on the practical aspects of mathematics. His own reformed system of logic reached its definitive form with the publication of the third edition of *Dialectique*. Humanism also supported Christian reform. The most important Christian humanist was the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus. He was hostile to Scholasticism, which he did not consider a

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proper basis for Christian life, and put his erudition at the service of religion by promoting learned piety *docta pietas*. In , he published *Enchiridion militis christiani* Handbook of the Christian Soldier , a guide to the Christian life addressed to laymen in need of spiritual guidance, in which he developed the concept of a *philosophia Christi*. His most famous work is *Moriae encomium* The Praise of Folly , a satirical monologue first published in that touches upon a variety of social, political, intellectual, and religious issues. Humanism also had an impact of overwhelming importance on the development of political thought. With *Institutio principis christiani* The Education of a Christian Prince, , Erasmus contributed to the popular genre of humanist advice books for princes. These manuals dealt with the proper ends of government and how best to attain them. Among humanists of the fourteenth century, the most usual proposal was that a strong monarchy should be the best form of government. Petrarca, in his account of princely government that was written in and took the form of a letter to Francesco da Carrara, argued that cities ought to be governed by princes who accept their office reluctantly and who pursue glory through virtuous actions. In *Laudatio florentinae urbis* Panegyric of the City of Florence , Bruni maintained that justice can only be assured by a republican constitution. In his view, cities must be governed according to justice if they are to become glorious, and justice is impossible without liberty. A fundamental belief among the humanists was that a ruler needs to cultivate a number of qualities, such as justice and other moral values, in order to acquire honour, glory, and fame. Machiavelli deviated from this view claiming that justice has no decisive place in politics. Machiavelli did not hold that princely regimes were superior to all others. In his less famous, but equally influential, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy, , he offers a defense of popular liberty and republican government that takes the ancient republic of Rome as its model.

Platonism During the Renaissance, it gradually became possible to take a broader view of philosophy than the traditional Peripatetic framework permitted. No ancient revival had more impact on the history of philosophy than the recovery of Platonism. The rich doctrinal content and formal elegance of Platonism made it a plausible competitor of the Peripatetic tradition. Renaissance Platonism was a product of humanism and marked a sharper break with medieval philosophy. Many Christians found Platonic philosophy safer and more attractive than Aristotelianism. The Neoplatonic conception of philosophy as a way toward union with God supplied many Renaissance Platonists with some of their richest inspiration. The Platonic dialogues were not seen as profane texts to be understood literally, but as sacred mysteries to be deciphered. In the treatise *In calumniatorem Platonis* Against the Calumniator of Plato , Cardinal Bessarion “ defended Plethon against the charge levelled against his philosophy by the Aristotelian George of Trebizond “ , who in *Comparatio philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis* A Comparison of the Philosophers Aristotle and Plato had maintained that Platonism was unchristian and actually a new religion. He considered Plato as part of a long tradition of ancient theology *prisca theologia* that was inaugurated by Hermes and Zoroaster, culminated with Plato, and continued with Plotinus and the other Neoplatonists. Like the ancient Neoplatonists, Ficino assimilated Aristotelian physics and metaphysics and adapted them to Platonic purposes. In his main philosophical treatise, *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* Platonic Theology on the Immortality of Souls, , he put forward his synthesis of Platonism and Christianity as a new theology and metaphysics, which, unlike that of many Scholastics, was explicitly opposed to Averroist secularism. Another work that became very popular was *De vita libri tres* Three Books on Life, by Ficino; it deals with the health of professional scholars and presents a philosophical theory of natural magic. He is best known as the author of the celebrated *Oratio de hominis dignitate* Oration on the Dignity of Man , which is often regarded as the manifesto of the new Renaissance thinking, but he also wrote several other prominent works. They include *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* Disputations against Divinatory Astrology , an influential diatribe against astrology ; *De ente et uno* On Being and the One , a short treatise attempting to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysical views; as well as *Heptaplus* Seven Days of Creation , a mystical interpretation of the Genesis creation myth. He was not a devout Neoplatonist like Ficino, but rather an Aristotelian by training and in many ways an eclectic by conviction. He wanted to combine Greek, Hebrew, Muslim, and Christian thought

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into a great synthesis, which he spelled out in nine hundred theses published as *Conclusiones* in . He planned to defend them publicly in Rome, but three were found heretical and ten others suspect. To this end he defended the use of magic, which he described as the noblest part of natural science, and Kabbalah, a Jewish form of mysticism that was probably of Neoplatonic origin. Platonic themes were also central to the thought of Nicholas of Cusa , who linked his philosophical activity to the Neoplatonic tradition and authors such as Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius. The main problem that runs through his works is how humans, as finite created beings, can think about the infinite and transcendent God. His best-known work is *De docta ignorantia* *On Learned Ignorance* , which gives expression to his view that the human mind needs to realize its own necessary ignorance of what God is like, an ignorance that results from the ontological and cognitive disproportion between God and the finite human knower. Correlated to the doctrine of learned ignorance is that of the coincidence of opposites in God. All things coincide in God in the sense that God, as undifferentiated being, is beyond all opposition. Two other works that are closely connected to *De docta ignorantia* are *De coniecturis* *On Conjectures* , in which he denies the possibility of exact knowledge, maintaining that all human knowledge is conjectural, and *Apologia docta ignorantiae* *A Defense of Learned Ignorance* . One of the most serious obstacles to the reception and adoption of Platonism in the early fifteenth century was the theory of Platonic love. Yet by the middle of the sixteenth century this doctrine had become one of the most popular elements of Platonic philosophy. Bessarion and Ficino did not deny that Platonic love was essentially homosexual in outlook, but they insisted that it was entirely honourable and chaste.

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5: Natural Philosophy in the Renaissance (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

The Renaissance and Byzantine learning: Italian Humanism and Byzantium. Byzantine and Western Platonism in the fifteenth century. Wimmer lecture: Renaissance philosophy and the medieval tradition.

Haskins published *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* in Medieval periods of renaissance[edit] Carolingian renaissance 8th and 9th centuries [edit] Main article: Carolingian Renaissance Carolingian minuscule , one of the products of the Carolingian Renaissance. The Carolingian Renaissance was a period of intellectual and cultural revival in the Carolingian Empire occurring from the late eighth century to the ninth century, as the first of three medieval renaissances. It occurred mostly during the reigns of the Carolingian rulers Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. It was supported by the scholars of the Carolingian court , notably Alcuin of York [1] For moral betterment the Carolingian renaissance reached for models drawn from the example of the Christian Roman Empire of the 4th century. During this period there was an increase of literature , writing , the arts , architecture , jurisprudence , liturgical reforms and scriptural studies. The effects of this cultural revival, however, were largely limited to a small group of court literati: Sir Kenneth Clark was of the view that by means of the Carolingian Renaissance, Western civilization survived by the skin of its teeth. Ottonian Renaissance The Ottonian Renaissance was a limited "renaissance" of economy and art in central and southern Europe that accompanied the reigns of the first three emperors of the Saxon Dynasty , all named Otto: The period is sometimes extended to cover the reign of Henry II as well, and, rarely, the Salian dynasts. The term is generally confined to Imperial court culture conducted in Latin in Germany. The Imperial court became the center of religious and spiritual life, led by the example of women of the royal family: Renaissance of the 12th century and Islamic contributions to Medieval Europe New technological discoveries allowed the development of Gothic architecture The Renaissance of the 12th century was a period of many changes at the outset of the High Middle Ages. It included social , political and economic transformations, and an intellectual revitalization of Western Europe with strong philosophical and scientific roots. For some historians these changes paved the way to later achievements such as the literary and artistic movement of the Italian Renaissance in the 15th century and the scientific developments of the 17th century. Medieval scholars sought to understand the geometric and harmonic principles by which God created the universe. Apart from depopulation and other factors, most classical scientific treatises of classical antiquity , written in Greek , had become unavailable. Philosophical and scientific teaching of the Early Middle Ages was based upon the few Latin translations and commentaries on ancient Greek scientific and philosophical texts that remained in the Latin West. This scenario changed during the renaissance of the 12th century. The increased contact with the Islamic world in Spain and Sicily , the Crusades , the Reconquista , as well as increased contact with Byzantium , allowed Europeans to seek and translate the works of Hellenic and Islamic philosophers and scientists , especially the works of Aristotle. The development of medieval universities allowed them to aid materially in the translation and propagation of these texts and started a new infrastructure which was needed for scientific communities. In fact, the European university put many of these texts at the center of its curriculum, [13] with the result that the "medieval university laid far greater emphasis on science than does its modern counterpart and descendent. In Bergen and Novgorod the league had factories and middlemen. The translation of texts from other cultures, especially ancient Greek works, was an important aspect of both this Twelfth-Century Renaissance and the latter Renaissance of the 15th century , the relevant difference being that Latin scholars of this earlier period focused almost entirely on translating and studying Greek and Arabic works of natural science , philosophy and mathematics , while the latter Renaissance focus was on literary and historical texts. Those who practiced the scholastic method believed in empiricism and supporting Roman Catholic doctrines through secular study, reason, and logic. Other notable scholastics "schoolmen" included Roscelin and Peter Lombard. One of the main questions during this time was the problem of the universals. The most famous of the scholastic practitioners was Thomas Aquinas later declared a Doctor of the Church ,

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who led the move away from the Platonic and Augustinian and towards the Aristotelian. These innovations included the windmill , manufacturing of paper , the spinning wheel , the magnetic compass , eyeglasses , the astrolabe , and Hindu-Arabic numerals. Renaissances before the Renaissance: Innes, "The classical tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance: Kittleson and Pamela J. Universities in Transition, , Columbus: Ohio State University Press, , p. University of Notre Dame Press.

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6: History of Science - Bibliography - Renaissance Philosophies of Nature - Dr Robert A. Hatch

Renaissance concepts of man: The Arensberg lectures: The dignity of man, The immortality of the soul, The unity of truth --The Renaissance and Byzantine learning: Italian Humanism and Byzantium --Byzantine and Western Platonism in the fifteenth century --Wimmer lecture: Renaissance philosophy and the medieval tradition --Appendix: History of.

Arrippa von Nettesheim, Heinrich Cornelius. Three Books on Occult Philosophy. Naturalism and Historical Understandings: Cambridge U P, Gilles Personne de Roberval. The life and death of Michael Servetus, U of Kansas P, U of Washington P, Paracelse et sa conception de la nature. The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance. Johns Hopkins UP, The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel Cause, Principle and Unity. Cena de la ceneri. The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast. U of California P, The Human Body as Image of the World. University of London, , microfilm in University os Wisconsin library. The Book of My Life. The Great Art or the Rules of Algebra. A Study in the History of Renaissance Ideas. Reprinted in Kristeller and Wiener, Renaissance Essays. The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy. The Platonic Renaissance in England. The Renaissance Philosophy of Man. Science, Medicine and History. John Konne and the New Philosophy. The Secular is Sacred: Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern. Alchemy and Chemistry in the Seventeenth Century. La zoologie au sezieme siecle. Leonardo da Vinci, Military Engineer. Der Musiktheoretiker Johannes Kepler. The Philosophy and Psychology of Pietro Pomponazzi. Physics and Music in the 17th Century. The Spread of Science Beyond the Universities. Mechanics in sixteenth-century Italy. Pico della Mirandola and the Scholastic Tradition. Selected Readings from Petrarch to Bruno. Hermetisme et mystique paienne. The Case for a Jewish Christianity. La philosophie de Nicolas de Cues. La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance. Science and Civic Life in the Italian Renaissance. U of Chicago P, Some Observations and Problems. Naturalism and Historical Understanding. Renaissance Concepts of Method. De Magnete magneticisque corporibus et de magno magnete Tellure physiologia nova. The Visual Image in Neoplatonic Thought. Bentley Glass et al. The Mystical and Medical Philosophy of Paracelsus. Four Hundred Years Ed. Arthur and Peter Beer. The Structure of His Philosophy. Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics. The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus. UP of Virginia, The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, Hunanisme, science et reforme: Pierre de la Ramee. Religion and the Rise of Modern Science. The Renaissance Philosophy of Giordano Bruno. Jacob, Margaret, and W. A Conflict of Concepts in the Renaissance. The De mundo of William Gilbert. Includes a facsimile reprint of De mundo. The Evolution of Medieval Thought. Reprinted in Mystiques, Spirituels, Alchemistes. Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance. Reprinted in Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters. The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino. Reprinted in Renaissance Thought. Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition. The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains. Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters. La tradizione aristotelica nel Rinascimento. Providence and the Mechanical Philosophy. Mersenne ou la naissance du mecanisme. The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance. A Hypothesis and Verification. Studies in Pre-Vesalian Anatomy: The Religion of Isaac Newton: The Fremantle Lectures Images of the Universe: The Artist as Scientist. The Remaking of European Thought. From Platonism to Neoplatonism. On the Shoulders of Giants. La cosmologie de Giordano Bruno. Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought. University of Illinois Press, The Breaking of the Circle. Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the aesthetics of the infinite.

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7: Renaissance philosophy - Wikipedia

Dr Robert A. Hatch - University of Florida Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition. Wimmer Lecture XV. 'The Place of Pomponazzi in the Padus.

Defining Renaissance Natural Philosophy Renaissance natural philosophy defies easy definition, since descriptions of it may oversimplify, either by reducing it to its connections with medieval science or, alternatively, forcing it into a teleology that culminates in the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Hence, there have been two opposing tendencies in scholarship: Recent contributions, however, have helped to outline the characteristics of Renaissance natural philosophy in their own terms. Medieval natural philosophy was usually based in the corpus aristotelicum and practiced in universities. Yet this did not mean that its approach was purely static or regressive; on the contrary, thinkers like Jean Buridan, Biagio Pelacani, and Nicole Oresme took Aristotelian physics and mechanics in new directions in medieval Europe. Nevertheless, the nature of medieval universities was such that teaching was heavily controlled by authorities, and both metaphysics and theology exercised a strong influence, limiting the number of directions in which scientific theorization could advance. Paradoxically, it was the return of another, rival school of thought—Platonism—that ultimately allowed for more freedom within the Aristotelian tradition. While Plato was regarded as a theologian and master of the metaphysical realities, Aristotle was seen as an investigator of the sublunar world subject to generation and corruption. The recovery of this ancient dichotomy had the effect of undermining the longstanding ties between Aristotelianism and Scholasticism, and opened up new spaces for philosophy unimpaired by metaphysical limitations. At the same time, also Platonism and other brands of ancient philosophy—Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism—stimulated reflection on the natural world in different ways. The application of these ideas to various fields of inquiry gave Renaissance natural thought a distinctive identity, forged in continuous dialectic with Aristotelianism. Aristotelianism therefore represented the driving force behind Renaissance philosophy of nature, both because of its plurality of approaches and internal debates, and also because it served as the polemical target of those who challenged the traditional paradigm of university teaching. Finally, other factors of a non-speculative character also had an impact on natural philosophy: The success and influence of Aristotelian natural philosophy was due to its centrality to university teaching, where it was favored because it covered every topic, like an encyclopedia. Physics, along with *On the Heavens*, *Meteorology*, and *On Generation and Corruption*, was the main reference for natural philosophy in the traditional curricula of the Faculty of Arts. Universities—especially in Italy—appointed many lecturers in natural philosophy, who usually received high salaries. In the second half of the sixteenth century, separate chairs, of botany, mathematics, and even chemistry in Mantua and Germany, were established. Aristotelian texts were traditionally studied according to the commentaries by Averroes which provided the internal partition of the texts into sections. Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the works of other, more ancient commentators on Aristotle were also adopted: The rediscovery of the ancient commentators was accompanied by an increasing reliance on the Greek texts in universities, despite the enduring predominance of medieval Latin material. New commentaries also appeared alongside the ancient ones: Usually these commentaries followed the texts according to the Averroistic divisions, but sometimes they were organized in quaestiones. Furthermore, the advent of printing made a large selection of textbooks more widely available: Other popular works used for teaching were abridged versions of the Aristotelian treatises reduced to conclusiones, like the popular *Textus abbreviatus philosophiae naturalis* by the French theologian Thomas Bricot d. There were also many different textbooks, which generally followed canonical organizations: The famous *Commentarii Conimbricenses*, which from on became the standard text in the Jesuit curriculum, contains a whole course on natural philosophy organized as a commentary of the Aristotelian corpus. Particularly after the second half of the sixteenth century, vernacular treatments of Aristotelian natural philosophy also began to circulate, such as the translations by Antonio

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Brucoli", the paraphrases by Alessandro Piccolomini", the summaries by Jean de Champaignac fl. The close relationship between natural philosophy and medicine had already been stressed by Aristotle himself at the beginning of *On Sense and Sensible*.¹⁹ Medicine often competed with natural philosophy within the universities: From this perspective, natural philosophy represented either a mere preparatory stage on the way to the more perfect and concrete knowledge of medicine, or, alternatively, medicine was subordinate to natural philosophy others, like the philosopher Jacopo Zabarella", preferred to distinguish natural philosophy from medicine because these two disciplines did not share subject and method. The Renaissance debate over the superiority of Aristotle or Galen was part of this rivalry: Aristotle was regarded by physicians as an important authority because of his philosophical system, but Galen had offered in his works more precise observations of the human body. Nonetheless, since many points of their disagreement e. Another discipline often compared to natural philosophy was astrology. The Jesuit Benito Pereira" stated that natural philosophy is different from astrology because, among other reasons, the former studies things a priori, the latter a posteriori. Pereira also claimed that natural philosophy was not capable of delineating its own sphere of inquiry, something which was possible for other disciplines such as logic and metaphysics. University courses on the Physics traditionally began with a lecture on ethical themes. The connection between ethics and natural philosophy also appeared in discussions of subjects like the immortality of the soul or the human will, and consequently ethical discussions could occupy large sections both in reportations of lessons and commentaries. Academies, Philology, and Botanical Gardens Outside of universities and schools, there were also other places where natural philosophy was cultivated, particularly in academies and learned societies. The Accademia dei Lincei, founded in , on the other hand, was exclusively interested in the sciences: Both of these latter institutions developed out of more informal associations and they encouraged collaboration among their members; they also explicitly endorsed the open and public exchange of ideas, as opposed to the secretive practices of groups like the Lincei. Their members gave public demonstrations of their work, and the secrecy which had characterized scientific pursuit for centuries was eventually abandoned in favor of a new empirical approach. Exceptional natural events such as earthquakes" a famous one occurred in Pozzuoli in " led to the publication of a number of short treatises which interpreted the calamity as either a natural phenomenon or as a sign sent by the celestial influences: Several Renaissance rulers cultivated an interest in sciences like alchemy, and patronized or participated first-hand in investigations of the natural world: The zoological and botanical works and catalogues which, though composed by university professors, started from the s to circulate around Europe, were often addressed to or sponsored by rulers who had the means to employ artists and other specialists needed to complete these costly volumes. Drawings were not simply ornaments to a text, but a necessity for accurate classification of plants and animals. The same desire for accuracy that motivated the production of scientific images also led to more rigorous editions and translations of classic scientific texts, whose impact was magnified by the printing press. Both the editions and the translations were intended to allow for a correct understanding of the text, which was often used by doctors and apothecaries. These empirical approaches were also stimulated by the discovery of new continents, which contained plants and animals never known or never described by classical authorities like Aristotle and Pliny. The new knowledge brought by travelers and explorers helped debunk erroneous doctrines advocated by Aristotle, such as the uninhabitability of the torrid zone from *Meteorology* b 6⁹: The shift from an exclusively text-based approach to the study of nature founded on the study of a limited number of authors, to a new one based on an enlarged encyclopedia and, above all, direct observation, reached its full expression at the time of Galileo Galilei; but it was already perceptible in the writings of Lorenzo Valla circa " " who appealed to common sense against the absurdity of some of the Aristotelian tenets" and in those of Leonardo da Vinci, who invoked a virtuous interaction between science and practice. When Tommaso Campanella" stated that he learned more from the anatomy of an ant or an herb than from any book ever written, he was simply expressing in a beautiful and poetic form a shared methodological creed. During the Renaissance, these precepts were both defended and revised by Aristotelian professors, or challenged by others who sought to

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dismantle traditional philosophy. While these new philosophers could rely on new evidence, methods, and observations to define the nature of the universe, in other cases the rejection of Aristotelian doctrines and their substitution with new paradigms was mainly based on speculative arguments. The fundamental principles of Aristotelian physics were in fact matter, form, and privation, and the natural sublunar world was therefore the location where according to these principles generation and corruption took place. Independent philosophers offered alternatives to these principles and to the Aristotelian hylemorphic apparatus. In order to describe nature within its own limits, Bernardino Telesio "a staunch opponent of Aristotelianism" defended a different set of principles which had already been proposed by authors such as Girolamo Cardano and Girolamo Fracastoro circa , and which he argued was based on data gathered from experience rather than on arbitrary constructions. These alternative principles were passive matter and active force, the latter distinguished into heat and cold. It was the interplay—or rather, the battle—between these opposite forces that brought about the natural world. Since every natural being depends on the interaction between cold and heat, it must know what is necessary for its survival: This connection between sensus and self-preservation was also advocated by Tommaso Campanella, who emphasized its importance for natural magic. The discussion on the nature of matter was further complicated by the suggestions offered by other traditions of thought, Platonism above all. According to Marsilio Ficino "in his Platonic Theology, prime matter had an existence which is not dependent upon form. Closely following the Timaeus, he claimed that matter can therefore be intelligible, though in a weaker way. Giordano Bruno "proposed an even more radical departure from traditional views of the passivity of matter. In the *De la causa, principio et uno*, Bruno affirms that matter is an active principle, not passive. Matter contains within itself every form, both corporeal and incorporeal, and can be described as a kind of infinite life. A few years later, Tommaso Campanella returned to a more traditional position. In the *Del senso delle cose e della magia* printed in he argued for the synonymy between matter and body, and against the identification of matter with the Aristotelian *prope nihil*, though he did emphasize its passivity: Scholastic philosophers had long struggled with this subject during the Middle Ages, and the most interesting developments during the Renaissance were driven by the confrontation between Aristotelianism and Platonism. Plato, in the *Timaeus*, had clearly spoken of a God-creator, and once again his doctrines were adopted by authors anxious to establish a new philosophical foundation for Christianity. In similar fashion, Marsilio Ficino expressly described prime matter as created and therefore not subject to generation and corruption. Aristotelians were not always afraid, however, to argue for the eternity of the prime matter: Francesco Vimercato , in his posthumous *De rerum principiis*, is the most remarkable example. As late as the beginning of the seventeenth century, the debate continued: Cesare Crivellati composed a dialogue between Plato and Aristotle in which the master rebukes his unfaithful student for teaching such an impious doctrine. On the other hand, there were also authors who attempted to establish an accord between Plato and Aristotle on this sensitive issue: Other thinkers instead had a pragmatic approach to prime matter: Though openly challenging traditional university teaching, Paracelsus did not reject canonical motifs. For example, he relied on the four elements air, fire, water, earth , but he also proposed a new triad: Yet, even this proposal was not as iconoclastic as it appears, since it was partially founded on the Aristotelian doctrine of the formation of metals contained in the *Meteorology* b 6ff. Nonetheless, by emphasizing the processes of association and dissociation of substances, Paracelsus offered an important contribution to the transformation of alchemy into chemistry. Gradually chemistry separated from physics, understood as the science of bodies subject to movement, and positioned itself as the science of bodies associated and dissociated. Johann Baptist Van Helmont , who opposed the Paracelsian principles, developed a corpuscular doctrine of matter, a variant of atomistic theory. Atomism in the Renaissance is typically related to the Neoplatonic concept of *semina* and to the Epicurean philosophy, and was usually advocated by radical anti-Aristotelian thinkers like Giordano Bruno. And while it is true that Aristotle rejected atomism and the existence of the void, there were ways to argue for a Peripatetic version of atomism. Some medieval philosophers admitted the existence of *minima naturalia*, the limits beyond which form is not conserved. The

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doctrine of the minima was intended to resolve a problem raised by Aristotle in *On Generation and Corruption* 30^a 24, namely, that of the necessity of finding a philosophical justification for combination, an intermediate phenomenon between generation and corruption. Over the course of the Renaissance the doctrine of minima naturalia was further elaborated by authors like Agostino Nifo circa 1500 and Julius Caesar Scaliger. Scaliger granted a consistency to the minima, making them not mere limits, but real physical components which cannot be further divided. Furthermore, he rejected traditional atomism, because it did not achieve the continuity of the corpuscles which constitute a body. Despite their opposition to Peripateticism, the corpuscularism of Van Helmont and Daniel Sennert was rooted in this tradition. Sennert, in particular, was unable to reject the Aristotelian concept of form, and aimed instead to establish a concord between Aristotelianism and atomism. Even in a work programmatically entitled *Philosophia Naturalis adversus Aristotelem*, Sebastian Basson who defended corpuscularism denied the existence of the void and rejected a mechanization of the natural world. It was Galileo Galilei who made a bold departure from the qualitative background of Aristotelian matter, defending a mechanistic form of atomism in which atoms did not have dimensions. Despite the attempts of Pierre Gassendi to conciliate it with Christianity, atomism bothered traditionalists also for its theological implications, both large the teleological vision of the world and small transubstantiation. Even Descartes came under attack for this reason. Light elements, such as fire and air, always tend to go upward, while heavy elements, such as water and earth, move downward following a rectilinear movement. In both cases, Aristotelian theory considers movement as a quality common to all natural things because of the elements which compose them.

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Renaissance Humanism Humanism is the term generally applied to the predominant social philosophy and intellectual and literary currents of the period from to The return to favor of the pagan classics stimulated the philosophy of secularism, the appreciation of worldly pleasures, and above all intensified the assertion of personal independence and individual expression. Zeal for the classics was a result as well as a cause of the growing secular view of life. Expansion of trade, growth of prosperity and luxury, and widening social contacts generated interest in worldly pleasures, in spite of formal allegiance to ascetic Christian doctrine. Men thus affected -- the humanists -- welcomed classical writers who revealed similar social values and secular attitudes. Historians are pretty much agreed on the general outlines of those mental attitudes and scholarly interests which are assembled under the rubric of humanism. The most fundamental point of agreement is that the humanist mentality stood at a point midway between medieval supernaturalism and the modern scientific and critical attitude. Medievalists see humanism as the terminal product of the Middle Ages. Modern historians are perhaps more apt to view humanism as the germinal period of modernism. Perhaps the most we can assume is that the man of the Renaissance lived, as it were, between two worlds. The world of the medieval Christian matrix, in which the significance of every phenomenon was ultimately determined through uniform points of view, no longer existed for him. On the other hand, he had not yet found in a system of scientific concepts and social principles stability and security for his life. In other words, Renaissance man may indeed have found himself suspended between faith and reason. As the grip of medieval supernaturalism began to diminish, secular and human interests became more prominent. The facts of individual experience in the here and now became more interesting than the shadowy afterlife. Reliance upon faith and God weakened. Fortuna chance gradually replaced Providence as the universal frame of reference. The present world became an end in itself instead of simply preparation of a world to come. Indeed, as the age of Renaissance humanism wore on, the distinction between this world the City of Man and the next the City of God tended to disappear. Beauty was believed to afford at least some glimpse of a transcendental existence. This goes far to explain the humanist cult of beauty and makes plain that humanism was, above everything else, fundamentally an aesthetic movement. Human experience, man himself, tended to become the practical measure of all things. The ideal life was no longer a monastic escape from society, but a full participation in rich and varied human relationships. The dominating element in the finest classical culture was aesthetic rather than supernatural or scientific. In the later Middle Ages urban intellectuals were well on the road to the recovery of an aesthetic and secular view of life even before the full tide of the classical revival was felt. It was only natural, then, that pagan literature, with its emotional and intellectual affinity to the new world view, should accelerate the existing drift toward secularism and stimulate the cult of humanity, the worship of beauty, and especially the aristocratic attitude. Almost everywhere, humanism began as a rather pious, timid, and conservative drift away from medieval Christianity and ended in bold independence of medieval tradition. Desiderius Erasmus , one of the greatest humanists, occupied a position midway between extreme piety and frank secularism. Francesco Petrarch represented conservative Italian humanism. Robust secularism and intellectual independence reached its height in Niccolo Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini Rudolphus Agricola may be regarded as the German Petrarch. In England, John Colet c. Humanistic contributions to science consisted mainly in the recovery of Greek scientific literature which evinced a more accurate and acceptable body of facts and ideas than most medieval scientific works. However, we should not exaggerate the humanist contribution in this field. Everything of value, for instance, in Galen c. The scientific treatises of Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy were translated into Latin and known to scholars before the Renaissance. Moreover, Islamic scholars had

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already introduced most Attic and Hellenistic science into western Europe, often with vast improvements on the original. Humanism embodied the mystical and aesthetic temper of a pre-scientific age. It did not free the mind from subservience to ancient authority. If the humanists revered Aristotle less than the Schoolmen did, they worshipped Neoplatonism, the Cabala, and Cicero more. They shifted authorities rather than dismissed them. Even Aristotle, the greatest of Scholastic authorities, did not lack humanist admirers. The humanists did, however, read their authorities for aesthetic pleasure as well as moral uplift. The intellectuals of antiquity, in contrast to the Christians, were relatively unconcerned about the supernatural world and the eternal destiny of the soul. They were primarily interested in a happy, adequate, and efficient life here on earth. Hellenic philosophy was designed to teach man how to live successfully rather than how to die with the assurance of ultimate salvation. This pagan attitude had been lost for about one thousand years, when Europe followed the warning of Augustine against becoming too engrossed in earthly affairs, lest assurance of successful entry into the New Jerusalem be jeopardized. Humanism directly and indirectly revived the pagan scale of virtues. When men like Petrarch and his fellow humanists read pagan literature, they were infected with the secular outlook of the Greeks and Romans. Even rather pious humanists became enamored of what Augustine branded the City of Man. Petrarch, a devout Christian, worshipped the pagan eclecticism of Cicero. Erasmus suggested that such titles as St. Cicero were not inappropriate or sacrilegious, and openly preferred the pagans to the Schoolmen. The first place must indeed be given to the authority of the Scriptures; but, nevertheless, I sometimes find some things said or written by the ancients, nay, even by the heathens, nay, by the poets themselves, so chastely, so holily, and so divinely, that I cannot persuade myself but that, when they wrote them, they were divinely inspired, and perhaps the spirit of Christ diffuses itself farther than we imagine; and that there are more saints than we have in our catalogue. And, on the contrary, when I read some of our modern authors, treating of Politics, Economics, and Ethics, good God! Nay, how do they seem to be insensible of what they write themselves! So that I had rather lose Scotus and twenty more such as he fancy twenty subtle doctors! Not that I am wholly against them either; but, because, by the reading of the one, I find myself become better, whereas I rise from the other, I know not how coldly affected to virtue, but most violently inclined to cavil and contention. The leading intellectual trait of the era was the recovery, to a certain degree, of the secular and humane philosophy of Greece and Rome. Another humanist trend which cannot be ignored was the rebirth of individualism, which, developed by Greece and Rome to a remarkable degree, had been suppressed by the rise of a caste system in the later Roman Empire, by the Church and by feudalism in the Middle Ages. The Church asserted that rampant individualism was identical with arrogance, rebellion, and sin. Medieval Christianity restricted individual expression, fostered self-abnegation and self-annihilation, and demanded implicit faith and unquestioning obedience. Furthermore, the Church officially ignored man and nature. In other ways medieval civilization suppressed the ego. In the feudal regime the isolated individual had little standing. He acquired status and protection mainly as a member of a definite group, whether lordly or servile. The manorial system revolved around the community rather than the individual. When the cities threw off the yoke of feudalism, they promised collective and corporate liberty rather than individual freedom. In commercial relations group life was paramount, both in the town guilds and the peasant villages on manorial estates. Everything was regulated by law and custom. The individual who attempted to challenge authority and tradition, in matters of thought or action, was either discouraged or crushed. The period from the 14th century to the 17th worked in favor of the general emancipation of the individual. The city-states of northern Italy had come into contact with the diverse customs of the East, and gradually permitted expression in matters of taste and dress. The writings of Dante, and particularly the doctrines of Petrarch and humanists like Machiavelli, emphasized the virtues of intellectual freedom and individual expression. In the essays of Montaigne the individualistic view of life received perhaps the most persuasive and eloquent statement in the history of literature and philosophy. Individualism and the instinct of curiosity were vigorously cultivated. Honest doubt began to replace unreasoning faith. The skeptical viewpoint proposed by Abelard reached high development and wide acceptance among the humanists. Finally, the spirit of individualism to a certain degree incited the

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Protestant revolt, which, in theory at least, embodied a thorough application of the principle of individualism in religion. It need not be supposed that the emancipation of the ego was wholly beneficial to the human race. Yet, that aspect of humanism which combated the sovereignty of tyrant, feudal lord, class, corporation, and tradition, has, for better or worse, had a tremendous influence upon the subsequent history of Europe. Indeed, it was during the humanist era that the freedom of individual expression and opposition to authority was first brought to the surface and became an integral part of the western intellectual tradition.

9: Renaissance concepts of man, and other essays. - Version details - Trove

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