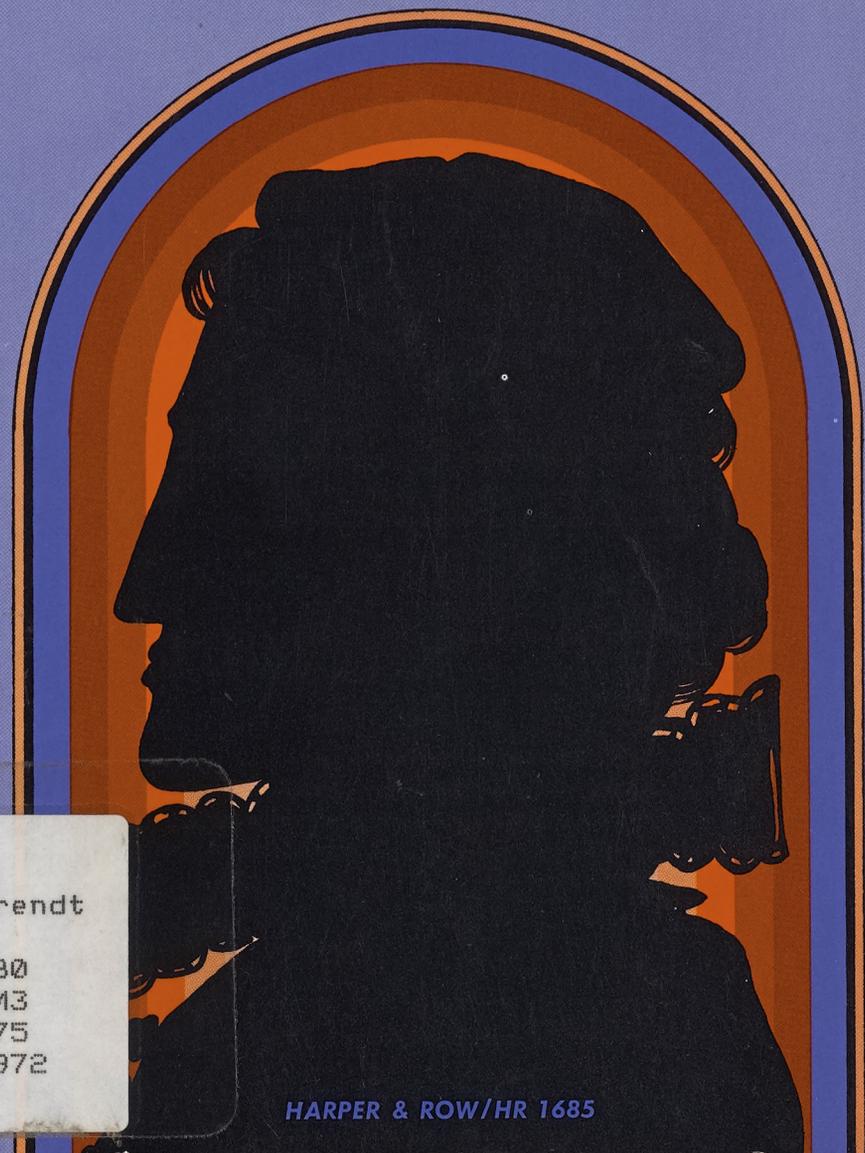


PAUL OSKAR KRISTELLER

Renaissance Concepts of Man

And Other Essays



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To Herbert Dieckmann

RENAISSANCE CONCEPTS OF MAN AND OTHER ESSAYS.
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curious fact, indicated by one of Facio's biographers many years ago, that he was encouraged to write this treatise by a Benedictine monk of his acquaintance, Antonio da Barga, who not only sent Facio a letter, urging him to write a supplement to the treatise of Pope Innocent III but even attached to his letter an outline of the treatise, which Facio seems to have followed to a certain degree.¹⁵ It would be easy to draw the amusing inference from this episode that the first humanist treatise on the dignity of man was really of monastic, and hence of medieval inspiration. However, it would be more correct to say that an Italian monk of the fifteenth century, who happened to be also a friend of Manetti and of other humanists and the author of treatises that we may call humanistic, was himself affected by the humanistic culture of his age and hence able to make direct and indirect contributions to it.¹⁶ More important and more substantial than Facio's treatise on the dignity of man is the treatise composed shortly afterwards by Giannozzo Manetti, another noted humanist famous for his philosophical and theological interests, his biblical translations, and his Hebrew studies whose work has not yet received sufficient scholarly attention.¹⁷ Manetti never questions or challenges the theological doctrines of sin and salvation or of man as an image of God, but in his treatise on man's dignity, man is primarily praised for his reason, for his arts and skills, on account of his natural condition, and of his secular knowledge.

When we enter the second half of the fifteenth century, the philosophical scene in Italy, and especially in Florence, came to be increasingly dominated by a new Platonic current which had its center in the so-called Florentine Academy and found expression

Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly, ed. Charles H. Carter (New York, 1965), pp. 56-74 at 68, 73-74.

15. Kristeller, "Facio," pp. 68 and 74.

16. See now P. O. Kristeller, "The Contribution of Religious Orders to Renaissance Thought and Learning," *American Benedictine Review* 21 (1970): 1-55.

17. See now H. W. Wittschier, *Giannozzo Manetti* (Cologne and Graz, 1968). Cf. note 10.

The Dignity of Man

in the writings of its founder Marsilio Ficino, his younger friend and associate, Giovanni Pico, and some other members of their circle. Unlike the earlier humanists, whose interests and concerns were largely literary and scholarly and whose philosophical ideas were on the whole limited to the field of moral philosophy and expressed in a loose and unsystematic fashion, Ficino and Pico, in spite of their wide knowledge and interests, were primarily professional philosophers and metaphysicians, well grounded in the texts and doctrines, terminology and methodology of ancient and medieval philosophy. Hence, I am disinclined to treat Renaissance Platonism merely as a part or offshoot of Renaissance humanism, as many historians of philosophy have done, and prefer to assign to it a distinctive place within the framework of Renaissance thought.¹⁸ I do not wish to deny that Ficino and Pico were linked rather closely with earlier and contemporary humanism. These ties are strong, and they do not merely affect the scholarly methods and the literary style of the two thinkers, but also their historical orientation and some of their central ideas and problems. In the treatment of the problem with which we are concerned in this essay, the relation of Ficino and Pico to the earlier humanists is quite clear: they share with their humanist predecessors and take over from them a profound concern with man and his dignity; but they develop this notion within a framework that was completely absent in the earlier humanists, that is, they assign to man a distinctive position within a well-developed metaphysical system of the universe, and they define and justify man's dignity in terms of his metaphysical position.

Ficino did not dedicate a special treatise to the subject of man and his dignity, as Manetti had done, but he discusses the problem rather prominently in his major philosophical work, the *Platonic Theology*, which contains a number of striking passages on the

18. P. O. Kristeller, "Florentine Platonism and Its Relations with Humanism and Scholasticism," *Church History*, 8 (1939): 201-211; "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources," in *L'Opera e il Pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*, I (Florence, 1965): 35-133, at 56-57.

personal experiences, thoughts, and opinions of an individual person, and the eager or, if you wish, uninhibited expression given to them in the literature and art of the period. Behind the endless display of gossip and invective, of description and subtle reflection there is the firm belief that the personal experience of the individual writer is worth recording for the future, preserving his fame and, as it were, prolonging his life. And I cannot help feeling that the widespread and prominent concern of Renaissance thinkers with the immortality of the soul was on the metaphysical level another expression of the same kind of individualism. For in his immortal soul, the individual person continues to live more effectively than in his fame and to extend his experience into eternity. The concern for immortality and the concern for fame are effectively combined in Dante's great poem which in this way proves to be a creation, not of the high Middle Ages, but of the period of transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Because the immortality of the soul was felt to be a metaphysical projection of that individual life and experience which was the center of attention for Renaissance writers and scholars, we can understand why this doctrine, though often expressed in other times and contexts, attained in the Renaissance a greater philosophical prominence than it had at any earlier or later period and why the discussion of this problem became one of the most important and characteristic themes of Renaissance philosophy.³ There is also a conscious link between the immortality of the soul and the dignity of man. More than once Ficino stresses the fact that the immortality of the soul is an essential part of its dignity and divinity, and he argues suggestively that without the immortality of his soul man would be inferior to the animals.⁴ In the earliest

3. G. Di Napoli, *L'immortalità dell'anima nel Rinascimento* (Turin, 1963); E. Garin, *La cultura filosofica*, pp. 93-126; P. O. Kristeller, "Pier Candido Decembrio and His Unpublished Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul," in *The Classical Tradition: Literary and Historical Studies in Honor of Harry Caplan*, ed. L. Wallach (Ithaca, 1966), pp. 536-558.

4. Kristeller, *Philosophy of Ficino*, pp. 344-345.

humanist treatise on the dignity of man, that of Bartolommeo Facio, the immortality of the soul is even presented as the chief argument for man's excellence.⁵ But unlike the dignity of man and the other notions which we have just discussed, the immortality of the soul became a prominent topic of philosophical discussion during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

As in many other instances, the Renaissance discussion of immortality depended in many ways on ancient and medieval sources, and the novel and distinctive traits of that discussion must be sought in matters of detail and of emphasis. In order to understand the issues, it is necessary not merely to enumerate previous doctrines that are roughly relevant to the problem under discussion, but also to pay attention to some precise distinctions. In Greek popular and religious thought, as expressed by Homer, there was something called the soul which survived as a shadow after the death of the body, but it did not possess a life or substance that would give it an immortality comparable to that of the gods.⁶ In a later phase of Greek religion that is associated with the name of Orpheus, the soul was capable of religious and moral purification and was subject to rewards and punishments after death. Among the early philosophers the soul was mainly conceived as the animating principle of the body. It was Plato who in a sense combined the religious and philosophical notions of the soul, conceiving it both as the animating principle of the body and as a moral and metaphysical agent capable of more or less perfect moral status. In his myths which have been connected with Orphic sources, Plato describes the rewards and punishments of the soul after death and also accepts the transmigration of the soul into other human and animal bodies as taught by the Pythagoreans. In the doctrinal sections of his dialogues, and especially in the *Phaedo*, Plato asserts and tries to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. He conceives this immortality as the natural attribute of

5. Kristeller, "Facio," p. 68.

6. E. Rohde, *Psyche*, 2d ed. (Freiburg, 1898).

an incorporeal substance that extends into the past as well as into the future. Among his chief arguments appears that from affinity. The soul is capable of knowing the pure intelligible forms or ideas; hence, it must be incorporeal and eternal like them.⁷ This Platonic doctrine of immortality was preserved and further developed by Plato's pupils and followers, and especially by the Neoplatonists. For them, not only the natural immortality of the soul as an incorporeal substance is an accepted doctrine confirmed by further arguments, but also the mythical notions of the rewards, punishments, and transmigration of the soul assume a literal significance and are made an integral part of the metaphysical system.⁸ This position is not shared by the other leading schools of later Greek philosophy. Aristotle in his early writings seems to have followed Plato, but in his extant works his attitude towards immortality is, at least, ambiguous. He nowhere asserts that the soul is immortal, and whereas he does say that the intellect is incorruptible, he does not state explicitly that this incorruptible intellect is a part of the individual human soul; and thus he left room for a wide area of debate among his followers and interpreters.⁹ Some of his most important ancient commentators, such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, explicitly placed the active intellect outside the individual human soul and thus tended to consider the latter as mortal. The Stoics did not consistently uphold individual immortality. They either restricted it to the sages or denied it altogether, and the doctrine of recurrent conflagrations would limit even the immortality of the sages to the present world period. Finally the Epicureans denied immortality altogether and had the soul perish together with its body, aside from considering the soul as a corporeal substance, a doctrine also held by the Stoics.

Whereas the history of the doctrine of immortality in classical

7. Plato, *Phaedo*, esp. 76d-77a. Cf. R. L. Patterson, *Plato on Immortality* (University Park, Pa., 1965).

8. Plotinus, *Ennead* II, 2-3 and IV, 7.

9. *De anima*, III, 4-5.

antiquity is pretty clear, its vicissitudes within the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity are far less easily described. There has been a good deal of controversy on the matter, and I must say that my own view differs from that of many other scholars and may be shocking to some. It is clear that some notions of a future life appear in the Old Testament and that the New Testament speaks very explicitly about the kingdom of God, eternal life, and resurrection. It is also true that body and soul are repeatedly distinguished in the New Testament and that at least one passage speaks of the future life of the soul.¹⁰ However, the writers of the Bible were no professional philosophers and had a very slight, if any, acquaintance with Greek philosophy and its terminology. There is an occasional, but not a consistent distinction between body and soul and no hard and fast statement that the soul (or even God) is incorporeal, or that the soul is immortal, let alone by nature. The majority of recent theologians have been led to admit that there is no scriptural basis for the natural immortality of the soul,¹¹ and those who refused to go that far have been forced to rely on implications or on later interpretations or on the dubious confusion of immortality with resurrection or eternal life. The Christian doctrine of immortality is not found in Scripture, but in the work of the early apologists and Church Fathers, from Justinus Martyr to St. Augustine. These writers were familiar with Greek philosophy, as the biblical authors were not, and for them it was as vital a task to reconcile Christian doctrine with Greek philosophy as it is for modern theologians to reconcile it with

10. "Animam autem non possunt occidere," *Ev. Matth.* 10:28. "Qui odit animam suam in hoc mundo, in vitam aeternam custodit eam," *Ev. Joh.* 12:25. These are the only scriptural passages cited in the Lateran decree of 1512 (see below).

11. Kristeller, "Decembrio," pp. 553-555. To the literature cited there, we may now add: R. Heinzmann, *Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele und die Auferstehung des Leibes, Eine problemgeschichtliche Untersuchung der fruehscholastischen Sentenzen- und Summenliteratur von Anselm von Laon bis Wilhelm von Auxerre (Beitraege zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, 40, 3 [Münster, 1965])*.

modern science. The Christian notion of the immortality of the soul, as it was finally formulated by St. Augustine, is clearly derived from that of Plato and the Neoplatonists. The soul is incorporeal and by nature immortal, and one of the chief arguments of its immortality is again its affinity with God and the eternal ideas inherent in Him which the soul is able to know.¹² Of the Neoplatonic doctrine of immortality, Augustine merely rejected what was incompatible with Christian doctrine: transmigration and preexistence. Thus modified, the concept of immortality without preexistence lost some of its consistency, and the argument from affinity, some of its force, but it became a part of standard medieval doctrine, more or less taken for granted by everybody, and especially by the followers of Augustine, but it was rarely challenged or discussed in detail.

When Aristotle instead of Plato became the chief philosophical authority in the thirteenth century, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul did not gain in prominence. Thomas Aquinas duly defends the incorruptibility and future beatitude of the rational soul, but he seems to avoid the term "immortality," and he does not attach especial importance to the subject.¹³ Duns Scotus explicitly states that the traditional arguments for the immortality of the soul are weak and inconclusive and adds that the belief in resurrection and eternal life should be based on faith alone.¹⁴ Whether also immortality is based on faith he does not state with equal clarity, and I tend to doubt it, since in his time the immortality of the soul had not yet been declared to be an article of faith. Instead the Council of Vienne declared the Aristotelian definition of the soul as form of the body to be an article of faith, a striking instance of the impact which a hundred years of Aristotelian

12. Augustine, *De immortalitate animae* and *De quantitate animae* (*Oeuvres* 1,5,2, ed. P. de Labriolle, Desclée, 1939).

13. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I q.75 a.6.

14. *Opus Oxoniense*, 4, d.43, qu.2; *Reportata Parisina* 4, d.43, q.2. S. Vanni Rovighi, *L'immortalità dell'anima nei maestri francescani del secolo XIII* (Milan, 1936), pp. 197-233, Cf. Kristeller, "Decembrio," p. 553.

speculation at Paris and elsewhere were to have even on theology and on church dogma. The scriptural grounds for this dogma might be even harder to find than for immortality, but this is no serious objection when tradition and church authority are given equal power with Scripture in establishing official doctrine.

A much more serious threat to the doctrine of immortality than the indifference of Aquinas or the fideism of Scotus was the doctrine of the unity of the intellect taught by Averroes and his Latin followers. In interpreting the third book of Aristotle's *De anima*, Averroes went beyond Alexander and maintained that both the active and the passive intellect are but one for all men and exist outside the individual human souls, and that the latter merely participate momentarily through their thinking faculties in this universal intellect whenever they perform an act of knowledge.¹⁵ In thus asserting the immortality of the universal intellect, Averroes removed at the same time the basis for the immortality of the individual human souls which are outside this intellect and merely have a temporary connection with it. Averroes' authority as a commentator on Aristotle was great, and his doctrine of the unity of the intellect exerted a great influence on all Aristotelian philosophers of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. While the so-called Averroists accepted the doctrine on purely philosophical grounds and thought it to be in accordance with Aristotle, all other Aristotelians who did not accept it still gave it careful consideration, including Thomas Aquinas, who wrote a special treatise on the subject in which (and this is characteristic) the issue of immortality is not prominently discussed.¹⁶

If we take all these facts into consideration, we arrive at the curious and unexpected conclusion that the doctrine of immortality did not play a major role in medieval thought, especially not

15. Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

16. Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus* (in his *Opuscula philosophica*, ed. J. Perrier, Paris, 1949, pp. 71-120; trans. and annot. by Bruno Nardi, Florence, 1947).

belonged; and Franciscan and Dominican friars such as John of Ferrara, Philippus de Barberiis, and above all, Jacopo Camfora, who wrote a treatise in the vernacular that had a considerable diffusion in both manuscripts and printed editions.

This literature is significant because it indicates a background and a climate of opinion that was receptive for a detailed discussion of the immortality of the soul such as we encounter it in the work of Marsilio Ficino. His major philosophical work, which consists of eighteen books and is entitled *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum*, deals mainly with the problem of immortality and might be described as a *Summa* on the immortality of the soul.¹⁸ Whereas the first four books deal with the hierarchy of being, the attributes of God, and the distribution of the souls in the universe, thus providing a general metaphysical background for the discussion, the remainder of the work consists technically of a series of arguments for immortality, although there are many digressions, and many arguments serve as an occasion, and perhaps as a pretext, for discussing other philosophical problems that are intrinsically important apart from their close or remote connection with immortality. While drawing freely on the arguments formulated by Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, and other thinkers, Ficino adds many of his own and also revises and recombines the thoughts derived from his predecessors. And while it is true that in his presentation of the doctrine he bases himself on a long and venerable tradition and that in dedicating a special treatise to the problem he has the precedent of some of his favorite predecessors, it is also worth noticing that Ficino's *Platonic Theology* greatly exceeds the immortality treatises of Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, or other writers, both in its bulk and in the relative importance it has within the framework of his own work and thought. Ficino became in a sense the philosopher of immortality, and it is legitimate to ask not only what he had to say about the subject, but also why it came to occupy such a place in his doctrine. Such questions are

18. Kristeller, *Ficino*, p. 346.

always difficult to answer, especially in a short discussion like this. But we have indicated as one factor that the problem was of wide interest to other writers and thinkers of the fifteenth century. Other factors must be considered that are connected with Ficino's own thought and orientation. I do not think that Ficino focused from the very beginning on the problem of immortality, if we may judge his development from his preserved early writings. His prevalent interest in the problem seems to begin with the *Platonic Theology*, a work which he first composed between 1469 and 1474 and published in 1482. His intent may have been in part polemical. He was dissatisfied with the tendency of contemporary Aristotelians to separate philosophy and theology, and he considered it his task to establish a basic harmony between the two, that is, between Platonism and Christianity. He was convinced that the Averroist doctrine of the unity of the intellect undermined the immortality of the soul and thus the whole of Christian theology, since he thought, though perhaps wrongly, as many theologians before and after him, that the immortality of the soul was a pillar of Christian theological doctrine. Important for this polemical purpose of the work is the fifteenth book, which consists entirely of a series of arguments against the unity of the intellect. It is the most detailed refutation of Averroism after that of Aquinas, and a close comparison between them might lead to interesting conclusions. However, Ficino's critique was concerned primarily, and even exclusively, with the defense of immortality, as that of Thomas had not been.

Aside from this negative consideration, there are also positive elements in Ficino's thought that may explain his prevalent concern with immortality. As some of his humanist predecessors, he clearly links immortality with the divinity of the soul and of man. Even more crucial, in my opinion, is another factor. Ficino's entire analysis of man, of his life and ultimate purpose, is based on the view that the true aim of man, and especially of the philosopher, is the ascent through contemplation toward the direct vision of God.

The contemplative life is for Ficino a matter of direct spiritual experience to which he constantly points and which he actually uses as evidence for the existence of God and the divine ideas, the incorporeality and divinity of the soul, and for the claim that the human soul was actually created with the task of knowing and attaining God through contemplation. Like some of his Neoplatonic and mystical predecessors, Ficino even hints that some privileged thinkers, perhaps even himself, were able to attain a direct vision of God during their earthly life, although but for a short moment.¹⁹ However, this is not enough. If the human soul was created with the task of attaining God and has an inborn natural appetite for God, we must postulate, unless this appetite were thought to be vain, that a large number of human beings will attain this goal in a permanent fashion. Hence, we must posit the immortality of the soul and a future life in which it will forever attain its goal, provided it has duly prepared itself for it during the present life through moral conduct, and above all, through contemplation.²⁰ This line of argument, which appears in a number of different versions, constitutes a recurrent theme throughout the *Platonic Theology* and is occasionally repeated in other works of Ficino. It is so closely linked with the central motive of Ficino's philosophy that I am inclined to consider it as the main argument that in his own mind was not only the most persuasive one, but the one that actually prompted him to undertake his great effort to prove immortality. The argument is not entirely original, and some of its versions may be easily traced to medieval sources or to St. Augustine, but the peculiar formulation given to it by Ficino seems to be his own, as is its predominant function and the attempt to link it with some of his other basic ideas. Aside from this argument, which we might call the argument from the natural appetite of the soul, the most important argument is that from affinity, that is, the notion that the soul is able to attain direct knowledge of

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 332 and 348.

20. *Ibid.*

incorporeal entities such as God and the ideas and must hence be itself incorporeal, incorruptible, immortal as are its objects. This argument occurs in one of its versions already in Plato, and it has been repeated throughout the Platonic and medieval tradition. It is, of course, hard to reconcile with the position of many Aristotelians who deny that the soul during the present life can know anything except sense objects. Moreover, it proves too much since it applies to preexistence as well as to future immortality, once we assume a direct present knowledge of incorporeal objects and assign to it more than an a priori meaning. Yet, Ficino considered the argument valid and made an effort to elaborate it with great detail. He could not accept preexistence any more than St. Augustine had done, but he did not attempt to demonstrate the creation of the soul as he tried to prove immortality. Rather, he seems to have considered it as an article of faith, confirmed, as it were, by one of the interpretations that may be given to Plato's *Timaeus*.

Ficino's massive work established a firm connection between the doctrine of immortality and Renaissance Platonism and also served as an arsenal of arguments for those who were interested in defending immortality on philosophical or theological grounds. The traces of its influence may be found throughout the sixteenth century and afterwards. Even in the controversy aroused by Pomponazzi to which we shall turn immediately, it is quite evident that the position identified and criticized by Pomponazzi as that of Plato is the one represented by Ficino and his *Platonic Theology*, with which Pomponazzi was clearly acquainted. On the other hand, some of Pomponazzi's opponents clearly draw on Ficino's arguments in trying to defend immortality against Pomponazzi. This is especially apparent in Agostino Nifo, as was recognized by Pomponazzi and other contemporaries,²¹ and in the Augustinian hermit Ambrogio Fiandino, whose Platonic orientation and de-

21. Edward P. Mahoney, *The Early Psychology of Agostino Nifo*, unpublished thesis, Columbia University, 1966.

pendence on Ficino appears in a number of his other writings.²² Historians of Averroism and of Paduan Aristotelianism are too much inclined to identify the opponents of that school in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with Thomism or traditional theology and fail to see or to appreciate the fact that the resistance to Averroism drew fresh strength from the humanist dislike of Aristotle, and from the Platonist critique of Averroism. It is significant that Pico della Mirandola, in his attempt to reconcile the views of different thinkers and traditions, intended to prove that the unity of the intellect was compatible with the immortality of the soul, a position that Ficino would have rejected; but we do not know the arguments with which Pico planned to defend this position.²³ The wide impact of the Platonism of the Florentine Academy on Renaissance theology appears in the writings of many sixteenth-century theologians and may even be seen in the decree by which the Lateran Council of 1512 condemned the unity of the intellect and formulated the immortality of the soul as a dogma of the Church.²⁴ The fact that the decree was opposed by Cajetan and that Giles of Viterbo played a prominent role at the Council tend to confirm the conclusion that this decree is as much the echo of Renaissance Platonism as the decree of Vienne about the soul as form of the body had been the echo of thirteenth-century Aristotelianism. The Lateran decree also confirms the suspicion that the immortality of the soul had to be officially promulgated as a church dogma at that late date, because it was considered indispensable for other theological doctrines but had no clear or explicit support in Scripture or other valid theological authorities. In a strict sense, the immortality of the soul as a Catholic dogma

22. He wrote commentaries on several Platonic dialogues and a defense of Plato against Georgius Trapezuntius. Cf. F. Lauchert, *Die italienischen literarischen Gegner Luthers* (Freiburg, 1912), pp. 239-240.

23. Kristeller, "Pico," p. 63.

24. J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, Vol. 32 (Paris, 1902), col. 842-843. For the decree of Vienne (1311), see *ibid.*, Vol. 25 (Venice, 1782), col. 411.

owes its authority and its status as an article of faith to the Lateran decree, which is still most commonly cited by Catholic authors when they discuss the problem. When it is now so widely believed that all of our convictions, especially in ethics and metaphysics, that are not derived from modern science stem from the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity, we may point in reply not only to the recurrent influence of Greek thought on secular philosophy and literature, but also to the numerous instances, of which the Lateran decree is but one, in which ideas first derived from Greek philosophy were actually absorbed and inextricably assimilated into the very heart of Christian, and to a lesser extent of Jewish doctrine.

A few years after the publication of the Lateran decree, the problem of immortality became again the center of philosophical and theological attention. In 1516 Pietro Pomponazzi, the Aristotelian philosopher trained at Padua and teaching at Bologna published his treatise on the immortality of the soul, in which he argues at great length that immortality cannot be demonstrated on purely natural or Aristotelian grounds, but must be accepted as an article of faith. The treatise immediately aroused violent opposition, and although Pomponazzi's opponents did not succeed in having his work officially condemned, an entire sequence of treatises was published against him, both by theologians and philosophers, including the later Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, the Augustinian hermit Ambrogio Fiandino, the Dominican Bartolommeo Spina, and the fellow Aristotelian Agostino Nifo. Pomponazzi tried to answer some of his opponents with two other works that are much longer than his original treatise—the *Apologia* and the *Defensorium*—but the controversy continued for many years, even after his death, and its repercussions may be seen as late as the eighteenth century and, if you wish, in the partisan views of many modern historians.²⁵

25. Di Napoli, *L'immortalità dell'anima nel Rinascimento*, pp. 277-338; E. Gilson, "Autour de Pomponazzi," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et*

The statement often repeated in textbooks and other popular accounts that Pomponazzi completely denied the immortality of the soul is obviously incorrect. He merely denied that it can be demonstrated on rational or Aristotelian grounds, and he even asserted that the reasons against immortality were stronger than the reasons for it but insisted that it was true as an article of faith.²⁶ This is what he persistently and explicitly stated, and the claim of some historians that he was not serious about it, but really meant to deny immortality altogether is merely an inference based on no textual or factual evidence. The question whether Pomponazzi was sincere in thus separating, or even opposing, reason and faith, philosophy and theology, is part of a much broader problem with which I hope to deal in my third essay. On the other hand, it has been claimed that Duns Scotus and other medieval thinkers had argued that the proofs proposed for the immortality of the soul are not valid and that hence Pomponazzi was by no means original. The answer is that Duns Scotus was far less explicit in discussing these proofs or in asserting that immortality was an article of faith and that in his time immortality had not yet been declared to be an article of faith. Moreover, Duns Scotus' remarks did not arouse much public controversy whereas Pomponazzi's did, partly on account of the Lateran decree, but also because of the much wider interest and stake Renaissance thinkers had in the problem and of the much more explicit challenge offered to it by Pomponazzi.

We have no time to go into the details of the controversy, which has received very recently much more detailed attention than in

littéraire du Moyen Age, 63 (1961, published 1962): 163-279; E. Gilson, "L'affaire de l'immortalité de l'âme à Venise au début du XVI^e siècle," in *Umanesimo europeo e umanesimo veneziano*, ed. V. Branca (Florence, 1963), pp. 31-61; Martin Pine, *Pietro Pomponazzi and the immortality controversy*, 1516-1524, unpublished thesis, Columbia University, 1965.

26. Petrus Pomponatus, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, ch. 15, ed. G. Morra (Bologna, 1954), pp. 232-238; *Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 377-381.

the past. I merely wish to emphasize that Pomponazzi explicitly sets his own opinions against three others which he attributes to Averroes, Plato, and Thomas Aquinas, respectively.²⁷ This presentation of the problem means that Pomponazzi is not merely setting up his own view against those of Averroes and St. Thomas, whom he recognizes as prominent authorities within his own Aristotelian tradition, but he also meant to deal with the Platonic position as recently restated by Marsilio Ficino whom he knows and respects. Considering the central place of immortality in Ficino's thought and the wide influence his work had exercised in this as in many other respects, we should not be surprised to see Pomponazzi offer an attack or a counterattack against the Platonic doctrine of immortality; and the fact that he also criticizes the Thomist and Averroist position might mean that he considers them inadequate interpretations of the Aristotelian view, as against that of the Platonists. The point is of some importance because Gilson, in his recent treatment of the controversy, which is extremely subtle and fair as far as Pomponazzi is considered, interprets Pomponazzi's view exclusively against the background of Thomism and Averroism and completely ignores the Platonist position, although it had played such a prominent role in the decades preceding Pomponazzi's treatise, is explicitly discussed by Pomponazzi, and was explicitly used and restated by some, at least, of his opponents.

Pomponazzi's arguments against immortality and against the specific proofs offered in its support are numerous and complex. However, I am inclined to think that the central argument, which is often repeated in slightly different form, is the one based on the relationship of the soul to the body. The statement that the soul during the present life depends on the body, especially for its knowing activity, must be clarified by an important distinction. The statement may mean that the soul needs the body for its

27. *Ibid.*, chs. 2-8. The short discussion of Plato (chs. 5-6) is ignored by Gilson.

mention an early question, to the problem of immortality shows that he is seriously concerned with it, and the fact that he arrives at the conclusion that it cannot be demonstrated merely indicates the great honesty of his thought, which appears also in his other writings. Finally, and this seems to me most important, Pomponazzi does not reject immortality altogether, even within the realm of philosophy, but holds on to a limited concept of immortality, while admitting that the more comprehensive traditional concept is philosophically untenable. In beginning his treatise, he asserts in a manner reminiscent of the Platonists that man occupies an intermediary position between mortal and immortal things, and shares through the faculties of his soul both in mortality and immortality.²⁹ And in the course of his work, where he formulates his own position as distinct from that of Plato, Averroes, and Thomas, he states that man is absolutely speaking (*simpliciter*) mortal, but relatively speaking (*secundum quid*) immortal, and in defending this view he states that the human intellect, though mortal, participates in immortality.³⁰ In other words, even within purely natural considerations, Pomponazzi expresses his basic concern for eternity by admitting a kind of residual immortality, one that does not depend on an infinite extension in time, but is fully realized in the actual experience of the present moment.

Thus the Renaissance left more than one heritage to later thought, on immortality as well as on many other issues. Ficino's concept of immortality as a postulate foreshadows Kant's treatment of the problem in his moral philosophy, although Kant would agree with Pomponazzi that the traditional proofs cannot be accepted as theoretically valid. On the other hand, Pomponazzi's residual immortality as a participation of the present in the eternal anticipates Spinoza and, perhaps, Hegel.

In recent thought the problem of immortality has been much neglected under the impact of positivism. Philosophers have

29. *Ibid.*, ch. 1.

30. *Ibid.*, ch. 7.

ophers, and in the current chaos of philosophical opinion where different schools seem to ignore rather than to refute each other, at least one lonely voice has advocated their reunion.¹ Our time, no less and perhaps even more than other times, has been puzzled by the actual diversity and competing claims of different philosophical positions, cultural orientations, and intellectual or professional traditions. The desire to attain a kind of harmony or synthesis seems natural enough, and the attempts to satisfy this desire are numerous, but they vary in scope and persuasiveness; and in their very effort to achieve a unity, they often produce new divisions. These attempts have always taken a number of typical forms. One way out of the confusion is always to assert one's own position in a dogmatic fashion and to impose it on others by propaganda or force, if not by strength of argument, while rejecting all other alternatives as false or irrelevant. Another attempt is the position known as skepticism in ancient, and as relativism in modern times. This position treats all philosophical and other opinions as erroneous, and leads us to a state of resignation in which we quietly accept the fact that we cannot know anything for certain and that all the claims made upon our intellectual assent are basically unfounded. This relativism may be given a slightly positive turn, and it becomes a kind of perspectivism that admits all different views, not as simply false, but as partly true. And Hegel made the ambitious attempt to construct a system in which each position, however conflicting with others, is assigned its place as a particular moment of truth. If we look at the confusing multiplicity of opinions and insights, of cultures and traditions, we are impelled to admit that the desire to transform this multiplicity into unity, the conflict into harmony or synthesis, is as natural and inevitable as it is difficult or impossible to achieve. The unity of truth is in my view a regulative idea in the Kantian sense. It imposes on us the task of bringing together into a single system the scattered and

X 1. Morton White, *Toward Reunion in Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).

extent it is the business of the historian, and especially of the historian of philosophy, to heap praise or blame on the victims of his interpretation, I am inclined to doubt the basic assumption that Pomponazzi wrote his statements on faith and reason in bad faith. I find no textual evidence for such a view, and I do not purport to possess special devices, chemical or intuitive, that bring forth the secret thoughts which an author wrote with invisible ink between his lines or kept in his mind without committing them to writing. I rather leave the burden of proof to those who make such claims, and stand for the time being on the written record as I think the historian, not unlike the judge, is obliged to do. If we make the contrary assumption, namely that an author meant to say what he said, an assumption which is not always wrong, we will come out with the conclusion that Pomponazzi, one of the most honest and acute thinkers of the Renaissance, found himself in a genuine dilemma when he was forced to admit, as in the case of immortality, that there was a discrepancy between the conclusions of reason and Aristotle and the teachings of the Church. I am inclined to admit that the dualistic theory, unsatisfactory as it may seem to us, is one of the possible attempts to deal with a genuine dilemma, and specifically with a case where there is an insoluble discrepancy between philosophy and theology, between reason and faith. I should even say that for a thinker who wanted to hold on to both reason and faith and found himself confronted with such a discrepancy, this is the most plausible manner in which he can face, if not solve, the dilemma. For somebody who is willing to do either without reason or without faith or without both, the dilemma ceases to exist, and the theory loses its purpose and meaning. But we have no basis to assume that this was the case of Pomponazzi or of his predecessors or contemporaries who adopted the same or a similar position.

It is interesting to note that the different interpretations of Pomponazzi's view which we have encountered in modern historians were expressed already in his own time and shortly after-

wards by his friends and opponents, but this is a subject which we cannot pursue in this essay. Instead, I should like to emphasize the contribution made by Pomponazzi's dualism to the discussion of the problem with which we are concerned. Faced with the competing claims of religion and philosophy and committed to uphold both of them, Pomponazzi in substance defends the view that faith and reason are each master in its own domain, and thus he opens the way for a genuine dualism or even pluralism that makes allowance for different sources of truth. I am convinced that his position still deserves examination on the part of theologians conscious of the competing claims of the sciences and of secular learning and on the part of scientists and philosophers tolerant of the claims that religion or art or other areas of human experience may make upon our thought. Perhaps this might be a way for us to deal with the "two cultures," or rather with the many cultures that are contained in the complex texture of our life and knowledge.

If we pass from the Aristotelians to the typical humanist scholars of the Renaissance, our problem appears in less precise outlines, as might have been expected, but still is felt to be present in several distinct ways. One type of discussion that seems to be relevant to our topic is the widespread debate about the relative superiority of the various arts and sciences. There is a whole literature on the merits of medicine and law that has received some recent attention.⁵ There is a similar discussion on arms and letters,⁶ and the superior claims of different arts and sciences found

5. Coluccio Salutati, *De nobilitate legum et medicinae*, ed. E. Garin (Florence, 1947); *La disputa della arti nel Quattrocento*, ed. E. Garin (Florence, 1947); G. F. Pagallo, "Nuovi testi per la 'Disputa delle arti' nel Quattrocento . . .," *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica*, 2 (1959): 467-481; Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* (1961), p. 157. A "sermo habitus in initio studii sub questione de praestantia medicinae et scientiae legalis" by Julianus Bononiensis dates from the early fourteenth century (ms. Vat. lat. 2418, cf. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, Vol. 2 [Leyden, 1967]: p. 313).

6. It flourished in the sixteenth century. Yet the fifteenth-century humanist Lapo da Castiglionchio wrote a *comparatio inter rem militarem et studia literarum* that occurs in several manuscripts (e.g., Florence, ms. Ricc. 149, f. 64-84, cf. *Iter Italicum*, Vol. 1 [Leyden, 1963]: p. 187).

from which they derived their own name. In defending the study of the classical poets against their theological critics, the humanists used some of the arguments advanced by the Church Fathers and often insisted that the pagan poems and the myths contained in them had an allegorical meaning that was compatible and in fundamental agreement with the truth of Christian religion. The faith in allegory and in the harmony or parallelism of ancient and Christian wisdom had a very great importance in the thought, literature, and art of the Renaissance and of the subsequent period down to the eighteenth century.⁹ Allegory has gone out of fashion since, and its somewhat crude application to the defense of ancient literature is no longer to our taste. But the claim that poetry and the other arts reveal their own truths, compatible with those of religion and of the sciences, or even superior to them, has found many defenders among romantic and later literary critics, as well as in modern philosophical thought.

In another sense, the humanists had to face the problem of truth in their discussion of straight philosophical and especially of moral problems which they considered to be a part of their legitimate domain. Uninterested as most of them were in a precise method or terminology, in a systematic presentation of their thought, or even in the content of cosmology or metaphysics, they were encouraged by the example of Cicero, their favorite ancient author, to borrow individual ideas or sentences from a great variety of ancient authors and to adapt them rather freely and flexibly to their own thought and writing. Ciceronianism in thought, as distinct from mere style or rhetorical doctrine, is the equivalent of eclecticism, and the moral writings of the humanists, from Petrarch to Montaigne, are full of quotations or adapted ideas taken from the most diverse ancient writers—technical philosophers as well as moralists, orators, poets, or historians. Not the authors whom modern scholarship considers as the greatest

9. E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 1958).

thinkers of antiquity were favored, but rather Cicero and Seneca among the Latins, Isocrates, Plutarch, and Lucian among the Greeks, authors whom modern scholarship studies for the information they contain on earlier and more original thinkers rather than for their own sake but who appealed to the humanists through their terse sentences and striking anecdotes. Ancient quotations were treated as authorities, that is, as a special kind of rhetorical argument, and each humanist kept his own commonplace book as fruit of his readings for later writing, doubly important at a time when there were no dictionaries or indices to speak of. Finally, Erasmus with his *Adagia* earned the gratitude of posterity by supplying his successors with a systematic collection of anecdotes and sentences ready for use, the real quotation book of the early modern period that everybody used but few cared to mention. Superficial as humanist eclecticism tended to be, much more superficial than its ancient counterpart, it still had the merit of broadening the sources of thought and information that an individual moralist was ready to use. It reflects the wide curiosity of the age, more eager to draw freely upon a vast range of undigested ideas than to submit a narrow body of authoritative texts to minute logical analysis, as the preceding period had tended to do.

Aside from the eclectic use of ancient ideas, especially in the area of moral thought, the chief impact of classical humanism on Renaissance philosophy was the revival of ancient philosophical doctrines other than Aristotelianism. Of special relevance to our problem is the revival of ancient skepticism that we may observe in several thinkers and writers of the fifteenth, and especially of the sixteenth century.¹⁰ The skeptical position insists that all philosophical doctrines may be refuted and is, on the face of it, quite negative with reference to the attainment of truth. But ever since antiquity, skepticism has proclaimed itself to be bringing about intellectual freedom, since it liberates its adherents from the

10. See note 2 above.

narrow restraints of fixed doctrines.¹¹ Moreover, the skeptical doctrine enabled its followers to approve any number of specific thoughts in an eclectic fashion, provided they admitted that these thoughts were merely probable and not strictly certain or demonstrable. Occasionally, a skeptic such as Montaigne would even grant that there is a single and immutable truth but add that this truth cannot be grasped by any human being, at least not in its entirety.¹² In the Renaissance skepticism often entered an alliance with a kind of fideism, as in the thought of Gianfrancesco Pico or in Montaigne, in a manner that had a precedent in Augustine but was, of course, quite unknown to the Greek skeptics.¹³ That is, whereas it is possible to refute and thus to discard any definite statement in the field of philosophy and of secular learning, religious doctrine, based on faith and authority alone, would be exempt from this rule of uncertainty and thus provide us with a firm belief that cannot be shaken by any rational arguments.

Another ancient philosophical school that was revived in the wake of humanism was Platonism, and it was Renaissance Platonism that, in my opinion, made the most interesting contributions to our problem. Here we find the tendency not only to establish a harmony between religion and philosophy, thus overcoming the dualism of the Aristotelians and the Skeptics, and in a sense returning on a different level to the Thomist position, but also to recognize that there is a comprehensive universal truth in which the doctrines of each school or individual thinker merely participated, thus reasserting in a more positive fashion the intellectual variety and liberty at which the eclectics and skeptics had aimed.

The general view is clearly implied in the thought of Nicolaus Cusanus. In his metaphysics each particular being is nothing but a

11. Eugene F. Rice, *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 187-190.

12. Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. J. Plattard, Vol. 2, pt. 1 (Paris, 1947), p. 326.

13. For Gianfrancesco Pico, see Schmitt (note 2 above). For Montaigne, see Donald M. Frame, *Montaigne's Discovery of Man* (New York, 1955), pp. 57-73.

particular manifestation or contraction of the one infinite and divine principle, and, in the same way, each human doctrine is but a special expression of the universal truth that can never be expressed in any one particular statement. On this basis, it is possible for Cusanus to find a partial truth in a variety of philosophical and religious doctrines, including Mohammedanism.¹⁴

What in Cusanus is a pervasive conception closely linked with the center of his metaphysics, appears in the Florentine Academy and its followers as a series of articulate, though not always fully developed statements. In the work of its leader, Marsilio Ficino, we find several concepts pointing toward the idea of a universal truth. First of all, he insists on a basic harmony between Platonic philosophy and Christian theology. In trying to defend the immortality of the soul, which he considered essential for religion and theology, and to refute the Averroist doctrine of the unity of the intellect, which he considered incompatible with immortality, he insisted that his opponents had destroyed the harmony between religion and philosophy and that he himself had been destined by providence to restore that unity.¹⁵ Yet, in his attempt to establish the harmony between philosophy and theology, he goes a long way toward putting them on the same level, calling religion and philosophy sisters and claiming that they are different expressions of the same basic truth.¹⁶ In thus raising philosophy to the level of theology (and he called his chief philosophical work *Platonic Theology*), Ficino goes not only beyond his Thomist predecessors, but also beyond his Aristotelian opponents. Moreover, although Ficino often speaks exclusively in terms of Platonic philosophy and Christian theology, his horizon of truth is somewhat larger than we might expect. Not only does he consider ancient Judaism as the true predecessor of Christian doctrine, as orthodox required, but

14. E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. M. Domandi (New York, 1963), pp. 28-31.

15. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (New York, 1943), pp. 27-29.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-323.

Ficino's younger friend and associate, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, went much further than his teacher in his conception of universal truth, and he gave the doctrine of universal truth a classical formulation that is most representative of the Renaissance period and has remained most famous ever since. In emphasizing the similar elements in the work of Ficino, I did not intend to diminish Pico's merit, but rather tried to show how and to what extent Ficino had prepared the ground for Pico's much more developed ideas on the subject.

For Pico, the idea that truth is universal and that thinkers of all philosophical and religious traditions have a part in it is one of his most pervasive and fundamental assumptions. And it is closely connected with his idea of liberty, for he keeps telling us that we should not be limited to the teachings of a single thinker or school but should study all thinkers of the past to discover the truth contained in their writings. It is this conviction that a share of truth may be found in the works of thinkers of all times, places, and religions that motivates and justifies the vast scholarly curiosity for which Pico has rightly become famous. This universal curiosity is reflected in Pico's training and in his library. He had a humanist education that comprised a solid knowledge of classical Greek and Latin literature, and he had also a scholastic training acquired both at Padua and Paris that gave him an unusual familiarity with the philosophical and theological writers of the Middle Ages. This combination of humanistic and scholastic training was unusual, at least in its extent, and it explains why Pico, though recognized as a consummate humanist by his friends and contemporaries, went out of his way to defend the scholastics against Ermolao Barbaro. Through his contact with Ficino, he acquired a thorough familiarity with the authentic and apocryphal sources of Platonism. But his curiosity went further. Pico learned Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, and he had the works of many Arabic and Hebrew writers that had been unknown to Western scholars explained or translated for his use. This applies to Averroes and

other Arabic thinkers, to the Jewish commentators on the Old Testament, and to the Jewish Cabalists. Pico's conviction that the Cabalists were in basic agreement with Christian theology gave rise to a whole current of Christian Cabalism that remained alive for several centuries and has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. And the vast variety of sources used by Pico appears not only in his library, but also in his writings.¹⁹

The most direct expression of Pico's belief that truth may be discovered in the writings of many authors and schools is found in the 900 theses, which Pico put together in 1486 for a public disputation he intended to hold in Rome during the following year and which was subsequently prohibited by Pope Innocent VIII, after a papal commission had examined the theses and found some of them to be heretical or dubious. The theses cover philosophy, theology, and several other fields, and some of them are presented as expressing Pico's own opinion. Yet a large number are explicitly taken from the writings of a great variety of thinkers. Among the authors used we find not only Albert, Thomas, and Duns Scotus, but also several other medieval scholastics, then Averroes, Avicenna, and several other Arabic and Jewish thinkers, then a number of Greek Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophers, the ancient theologians such as Pythagoras and Trismegistus, and finally the Cabalists.²⁰ The combination of so many authors whose views had given rise to competing schools clearly implies Pico's conviction that their teachings, or at least some of them, may be reconciled in a comprehensive doctrine, and this tendency becomes curiously evident in another thesis where Pico claims that the unity of the intellect may be reconciled with the immortality of

19. Kristeller, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources," in *L'Opera e il Pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*, I (Florence, 1965): 35-133. Cf. P. Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola* (New York, 1936). For his Cabalism, see J. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York, 1944); F. Secret, *Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1964).

20. Jo. Picus, *Opera* (Basel, 1572), pp. 63-113.

the soul, a view to which neither Ficino nor Pomponazzi would have subscribed.²¹

Yet, the notion that all thinkers have a share in truth is not merely implied by the choice of authors cited in the theses, but it is explicitly set forth in the Oration Pico composed for the disputation. This Oration, which has been preserved for us in an early draft (discovered by Garin) and in a posthumous edition, as eloquently treats in its second part the universality of truth as its first part deals with the dignity of man. It also is apparent that the universality of truth constitutes the theme which is meant to announce and justify the disputation of the theses, and hence this section was repeated with but minor changes in the *Apologia*, which Pico published in 1487 after the condemnation of some of his theses. "Pledged to the doctrines of no man," Pico says, "I have ranged through all the masters of philosophy, investigated all books, and come to know all schools." He adds that each school, and each philosopher, has some distinctive merit, and he praises in turn the philosophers whose doctrines he is going to defend. "This has been my reason for wishing to bring before the public the opinions not of a single school alone . . . but rather of every school to the end that the light of truth. . . through this comparison of several sects and this discussion of manifold philosophies might dawn more brightly on our minds."²² But not content with repeating the truths discovered by others, Pico claims to add some of his own and proceeds to justify some of his own teachings set forth in the remainder of the theses. Still more concisely, the underlying idea appears in the early version of the speech: "There has been nobody in the past, and there will be nobody after us, to whom truth has given itself to be understood in its entirety. Its immensity is too great for human capacity to be equal to it."²³

21. See Chapter 2, note 23.

22. *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Garin (1942), pp. 138-142.

23. Garin, *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano* (Florence, 1961), p. 239.

Pico's notion of truth shares with the skeptics the rejection of the dogmatic claims of any particular master or school and with the eclectics the intellectual freedom to choose from the writings of any philosopher what seems to be true or useful. Yet, unlike the eclectics, he does not choose at random what he pleases, but he seems to be guided by an intuitive certainty of what is true (and this he derives from the Platonist tradition); and unlike the skeptics he does not stress the inadequacy that separates all human opinion from the absolute truth, but rather the positive share it derives from that truth. Pico does not believe with Hegel that every philosophical position as a whole constitutes, as it were, a form of truth. He rather thinks (and this idea he derives from the scholastic tradition) that the work of every thinker is made up of a great number of specific statements and that the truth or falsity of any one of them does not stand or fall with that of all others. He feels perfectly free to reject the views of any past thinker on any particular point, but he is convinced that the work of every philosopher worthy of the name contains some true statements and that the presence of these true statements makes the philosopher worth studying and justifies the effort we may have to make to study his language and to read his writings. At the same time, Pico does not think that the study of past opinions leaves us no room for new or original thoughts. In combining or recombining the views expressed by our predecessors, we already give them a form and synthesis that differs from any one of them, and in adopting or criticizing their opinions, we clear the ground for advancing new and more valid opinions of our own. Thus, Pico voices a supreme confidence in the value of both learning and originality, and the only reservation we may have to make about it is that while what he offers us is, to be sure, a magnificent program, he was prevented, and perhaps not only through his early death, from working it out in a concrete and viable system. Yet, if we take his view of universal truth not as an established doctrine, but as a regulative idea, it is still as suggestive as it was in Pico's own time.

Only the specific ideas and traditions and elements of knowledge that are given to us and that we must try to harmonize are different from those of the Renaissance.

Before we leave our subject, we must briefly discuss another Renaissance author who belonged to the school of Ficino and Pico and who was much less famous or distinguished than either of them. This author is Augustino Steuco, a liberal Catholic theologian of the mid-sixteenth century. Restating and developing with great learning the views of the Renaissance Platonists, he chose for his main work a title that summed up their aspirations in a new way and that was to have a persistent appeal through the subsequent centuries up to the present: the perennial philosophy.²⁴ The notion of a perennial philosophy, of a wisdom that pervades the entire history of human thought, although it may be obscured in each instance by false or irrelevant ideas, has been expressed a number of times even in our century; although, in effect, many different systems of thought have claimed, each for itself, to represent this perennial philosophy. Most frequently the term has been used in connection with Thomism, and hence some scholars, who knew the title but not the content of Steuco's work, have thought that he was a Thomist. Actually, Steuco was a Renaissance Platonist, and the perennial philosophy which he had in mind was the doctrine of Platonism, represented by Plato and his ancient and early modern followers but also by his supposed early predecessors. Steuco, in effect, conceived a Plato who was in basic agreement with Aristotle and other ancient philosophers on a number of points and, above all, with Jewish and Christian theology. The label "perennial philosophy" turned out to be fortunate, and the term was taken up by many later thinkers, whether or not they shared Steuco's philosophical position or even were aware of it. It is a term that may be used for the claims of a special school, but in its original intent it reflects the idea, best expressed by Pico,

24. Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27 (1966): 505-532.

of a universal truth that is beyond any particular human doctrine but in which each doctrine, if worthy of that name, has a share. The idea of the perennial philosophy imposes upon us the task of keeping it alive by trying to grasp and synthesize every element of truth given to us by the earlier thinkers and traditions which are accessible to us and by adding to it whatever we may be able to discover for ourselves by the resources of our thought or experience.

We have reached the conclusion of our rapid and somewhat superficial discussion of three major themes of Renaissance thought: the dignity of man, the immortality of the soul, and the unity of truth. We have not tried to exhaust the numerous philosophical and theological doctrines that may be said to add up to such a thing as the Renaissance conception of man. We have merely touched on three aspects of that conception. The praise of man's dignity reflects some of the aspirations of the period and leads to an attempt to assign to man a privileged place in the scheme of things. The doctrine of immortality is, in a way, an extension of man's dignity and individuality beyond the limits of his present life, and, thus, the emphasis on immortality provides, in turn, a horizon for this life itself. The problem of truth may be conceived and treated in different terms, but the angle of it which we have stressed, the quest for the unity of truth in the face of divergent and apparently incompatible doctrines, is again related to man and his concerns. In a moment such as ours when there is so much talk about commitment, it might not be amiss to point out that one of the basic human commitments, and for a philosopher or theologian, scientist or scholar the only legitimate commitment, is the commitment to truth and that there is even some existentialist authority for this statement. But I gladly admit that the problems discussed here represent but a small and arbitrary selection among the philosophical ideas expressed by Renaissance thinkers on man or on any other subject. I have selected them merely because they have impressed me as interesting and charac-

teristic among the ideas found in the work of some Renaissance authors whom I have read most frequently and most attentively, although even in the case of these authors, my knowledge and my understanding obviously have their limitations.

I do not wish to suggest that Renaissance thought, on the matters we have discussed or on any others, supplies us with ready-made solutions that we could accept as valid answers to our own problems. Every period, every generation, every thinking person must find its own answers, and if we study the history of philosophy or of civilization in search of such ready answers, we are bound to be disappointed. Past thought is intrinsically interesting, I believe, because it shows us precedents and analogies for our problems, and it may enlarge our perspective by putting before us alternatives of which we had not thought. We should neither uncritically admire nor imitate the past, or can we afford to completely ignore it. We must know it first before we can take from it what we can use and approve, while rejecting the rest. I often hear responsible, or rather irresponsible, educators say that the knowledge of the past, or even our present knowledge, should be adapted to the needs and interests of our time, and especially of our younger generation. We should rather stand by our conviction that some, if not all, of this knowledge is intrinsically true and valid and that the younger generation will have to absorb it before it can make any significant contribution of its own. In the long run, it is not the past that is measured by us, but we ourselves will be measured by it and judged by it since we have to prove to the future whether we have lived up to the standards of the past. As it has been said that nobody can command who has not first learned to obey, so I should like to say that nobody can create or build who has not first learned what there is to be learned. Human civilization is a cumulative process, and any part of it is more easily and more quickly destroyed than rebuilt. No single generation can hope to build or rebuild it from the bottom, and hence we should gratefully accept and appreciate the building materials

that is, in the field of Greek studies. It will thus be necessary for us to limit our attention in this paper almost entirely to this area, whereas the contacts between Byzantium and the Italian Renaissance in the field of philosophy will be the subject of another paper.

A discussion of our subject would seem to be most timely since Byzantine studies have been much cultivated during the last few decades. Yet, these studies deal with a period that lasted more than a thousand years, and they have concentrated for the most part on political and economic history, on religious institutions and theological doctrines, on literature, music, and the visual arts but have dealt only to a small extent with classical scholarship and with philosophy. Hence, many questions that from our point of view would be especially important remain to my knowledge still unresolved and are in need of further research.¹

If we want to understand the state and development of Greek studies in the West during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, we must go back to classical antiquity, that is, to the Greek culture

1. For the general bibliography of our subject, I should like to cite the following works: N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955); *Byzantium*, ed. N. H. Baynes and H. St. L. B. Moss (Oxford, 1949); H. G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959); R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge, 1954); R. Devreesse, *Introduction à l'étude des manuscrits grecs* (Paris, 1954); Devreesse, *Les manuscrits de l'Italie méridionale* (Vatican City, 1955); A. Ehrhard, *Ueberlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1937–1952); K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, 2d ed. (Munich, 1897); E. Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1885–1906); K. Oehler, *Antike Philosophie und Byzantinisches Mittelalter* (Munich, 1969); R. Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1905–1914); J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, Vol. I, 3d ed. (Cambridge, 1921); I. Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 15 (1961): 167–186; B. Tatakis, *La philosophie byzantine* (Paris, 1949); M. Vogel and V. Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1909); G. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums*, 3d ed., 2 vols. (Berlin, 1893).

of the Romans; for the foundation of medieval Western culture was Latin and not Greek. During the later Republic and the first centuries of the Empire most educated Romans knew Greek, and many of them even wrote in Greek, as did Marcus Aurelius. At the same time Latin literature developed under the continuing influence of Greek models, and the small number of Latin writings that dealt with philosophical or scientific subjects is entirely derived from Greek sources.² Also Latin Christianity derived its scriptures and its theology from the Greek East. With the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages, the Latin West not only became separated from the Greco-Byzantine East in a political sense, but it also lost the knowledge of the Greek language and thus its direct access to ancient Greek culture.³ Hence, the first medieval centuries, up to the middle of the eleventh century, were largely restricted to the literary, philosophical, and scientific resources of the Latin tradition. This tradition was rich in concepts and ideas, literary forms, and rhetorical and poetical theory and practice of Greek origin, but it possessed or, at least, preserved but very few translations of Greek texts. The Latins had above all the Bible and many writings of the Greek Fathers, a part of Plato's *Timaeus*, the *Categories* and *De interpretatione* of Aristotle with Porphyry's *Introduction to the Categories*, in the translation of Boethius, and some medical and mathematical writings. That large and important part of classical Greek literature which had not been translated into Latin was not accessible to the first centuries of the Latin Middle Ages, and the significance of this fact seems to have escaped some recent historians of that important period.

This situation changed to some extent, but only to some extent, during the period that extends from the second half of the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth or the first half of the fourteenth. Historians of that period have rightly emphasized the

2. W. Stahl, *Roman Science* (Madison, Wis., 1962).

3. P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident, De Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris, 1943).

continued or resumed contacts of the West with Byzantium in the political and economic fields, in church affairs, and in the arts, and they have also stressed the continued presence of the Greek language and culture in Sicily and in some parts of Southern Italy. The Crusades and the Latin conquest of the Byzantine Empire had their repercussions also in the area of intellectual history. This period produced a sizable number of Latin translations of ancient Greek texts that had never been translated at the time of antiquity or of the early Middle Ages. Some of these translations were made from the Arabic, others, directly from the Greek. The Greco-Latin translations evidently presuppose both some knowledge of Greek on the part of the translators and some access to the Greek texts.⁴ There were also several attempts, especially at the time of the Council of Vienne, to introduce the teaching of Greek at some of the major universities.

These facts should be duly considered, but we should also note their limited significance and should not exaggerate their importance. We know from other medieval and modern examples that political and commercial contacts and even artistic influences do not require a close acquaintance with the language or civilization of the country of origin. Hence, they do not always lead to scientific or literary influences since the latter depend on such an acquaintance and also presuppose in him who learns a genuine interest in the characteristic values of a foreign civilization. The fact that Greek was spoken in Sicily and Southern Italy does not indicate by itself a flourishing state of Greek classical studies unless there was also some knowledge of the classical Greek language, some Greek

4. C. H. Haskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1927); J. T. Muckle, "Greek Works Translated Directly into Latin before 1350," *Mediaeval Studies*, 4 (1942): 33-42; 5 (1943): 102-114; G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, 3 vols. (Baltimore, Md., 1927-1948); A. Siegmund, *Die Ueberlieferung der griechischen christlichen Literatur in der lateinischen Kirche bis zum zwölften Jahrhundert* (Munich-Pasing, 1949); M. Steinschneider, *Die europaischen Uebersetzungen aus dem Arabischen bis Mitte de 17. Jahrhunderts* (Graz, 1957).

classical texts in the libraries of the region, and some tradition of classical and not only ecclesiastic studies in the monastic or city schools of the area. We have recently learned a good deal about the libraries and the manuscripts and also about the literary production of Greek Italy but so far very little about its schools and studies.⁵ At the present state of our knowledge I am not convinced that Greek classical studies in the West were as strongly influenced by Greek Italy as they were by Greece herself, and especially by Constantinople. Greek Italy made, no doubt, its contribution to Byzantine civilization, and not only in the field of theology; but in the case of some of its notable representatives, such as Johannes Italos or Barlaam of Calabria, it is probable that they received their classical education, at least in part, at Constantinople rather than at home. To my knowledge, there is not yet any evidence that Greek Italy had her own indigenous tradition in the field of classical studies, as was the case in ecclesiastic learning or in Byzantine literature.

If we pass from Greek Italy to the rest of Latin Europe, the traces of Greek learning are very scanty indeed.⁶ The decrees intended to introduce the study of Greek at the universities remained, for the most part, a dead letter, and we have no clear case

5. R. Devreesse, *Les manuscrits grecs de l'Italie méridionale* (Vatican City, 1955); M. Gigante, *Poeti italobizantini del secolo XIII* (Naples, 1953); Barlaam Calabro, *Epistole greche*, ed. G. Schirò (Palermo, 1954); K. Setton, "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 100 (1956): 1-76.

6. B. Bischoff, "Das griechische Element in der abendlaendischen Bildung des Mittelalters," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (1951): 27-55; Louise R. Loomis, *Medieval Hellenism* (Lancaster, Pa., 1906); R. Weiss, "The Translators from the Greek of the Angevin Court of Naples," *Rinascimento* 1 (1950): 195-226; R. Weiss, "The Study of Greek in England during the Fourteenth Century," *Rinascimento*, 2 (1951): 209-239; Weiss, "The Greek Culture of South Italy in the Later Middle Ages," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 37 (1951): 23-50; Weiss, "England and the Decree of the Council of Vienne on the Teaching of Greek, Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 14 (1952): 1-9; Weiss, "Lo studio del greco all'abbazia di San Dionigi durante il medio evo," *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia*, 6 (1952): 426-438; Weiss, "Lo studio del greco all'Universita di Parigi," *Convivium*, N.S. 2 (1955): 146-149.

of a tradition of Greek studies in the West before the second half of the fourteenth century. In the inventories of medieval libraries Greek manuscripts are extremely rare, and in most instances what we find are bilingual Gospels or psalters. As to the translators from the Greek, we know that they acquired their knowledge of Greek and the Greek books from which they worked either in Sicily or in the East. Their knowledge of Greek was also quite limited, as we can see when we study their translations and collate them with the Greek originals. They translate "ad verbum" and without any feeling for the syntax or phraseology of classical Greek.⁷ Also the content of their translations is narrowly limited. The translations cover almost exclusively the fields of theology, the sciences, and philosophy, and among the philosophical writings the works of Aristotle predominate. The other ancient Greek philosophers are represented only to a small extent, and the poets, orators, and historians of ancient Greece are practically omitted.⁸ This choice, in what it includes and excludes, reflects in part a strong theological interest and in part a scientific interest of Arabic origin.⁹ The interest that inspires these translations is didactic and scholastic. The translators choose treatises full of a content that may be learned and developed. That which was to characterize the humanists is completely absent: an interest for literature and for a thought that is diversified and fluid and a taste for the form and the nuances of language, of style, and of thought.

7. *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi, Plato Latinus*, ed. R. Klibansky, 4 vols. (London, 1940-1962). See my reviews in the *Journal of Philosophy*, 37 (1940): 695-697; 53 (1956): 196-201; 62 (1965): 14-17.

8. The main exceptions are Plato, Proclus, and Sextus Empiricus for the Greek philosophers not connected with the Aristotelian tradition and Demetrius (*de elocutione*) and Isocrates (*ad Demonicum*) for the rhetorical authors. Cf. Muckle, "Greek Works Translated into Latin;" Sabbadini, *Le Scoperte* (II 264, for Isocrates). None of these authors was completely translated during the Middle Ages.

9. M. Steinschneider, *Die Arabischen Uebersetzungen aus dem Griechischen* (Graz, 1960); R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* (Oxford, 1962); A. Badawi, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe* (Paris, 1968).

During the next period that goes from the middle of the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century, the state of Greek studies in Western Europe underwent a profound change. During the sixteenth century, the teaching of the classical Greek language and literature had become firmly established at the major universities and at many secondary schools. The chief Western libraries were full of Greek classical manuscripts, and a large part of the classical Greek texts had by then been widely distributed in printed editions. All these Greek texts were translated into Latin and into the various national languages, either for the first time or in new and more accurate translations, and these translations had an even wider diffusion than the original texts themselves. There also developed a tradition of precise Greek scholarship which constitutes the first phase of Greek philology in the West and which finds expression not only in critical editions and translations of the texts, but also in commentaries and miscellaneous studies and in treatises on history and mythology, grammar and rhetoric, philosophy and theology.

This flourishing state of Greek studies in the West that surpassed anything seen in that part of the world either in Roman antiquity or during the Middle Ages coincides in time with the decline and destruction of the Byzantine Empire and with the emigration of many Byzantine scholars to the West, and especially to Italy. Hence, there arises the question which is the subject of this paper: what was the contribution of the Byzantine tradition to the rich development of Greek studies that occurred in the West between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries and that was due in large part to the work of the Italian and other Western humanists?

In order to answer this question it would be necessary to study the history of classical scholarship during the Byzantine Middle Ages, a subject with which I am not well acquainted and which perhaps has not been sufficiently explored even by the specialists of Byzantine history. I must limit myself to a few well-established

facts, and perhaps they will be sufficient for our purpose. During the long period that extends from the end of the eighth century to the fourteenth and fifteenth, classical studies had their shorter or longer periods of decline, to be sure, but they were never completely abandoned. We know that many classical texts were lost in the period between the end of antiquity and the eighth century and many others also after the eighth century. Yet, the greater part of the Greek authors that we now have, with the exception of the texts recently recovered by papyrologists, have been preserved through the labors of Byzantine scholars. These texts were collected and kept in their libraries, they were recopied, read, and studied. We also know that the classical poets and prose writers were read in the schools at Constantinople and elsewhere at least from the ninth century on, and it seems to be characteristic of the Byzantine schools that the philosophers, both Plato and Aristotle, and the Church Fathers were read together with Homer and the tragedians, historians, and orators. As a matter of fact, we have Byzantine commentaries and scholia not only on Aristotle and Plato, but also on Homer, Pindar, and Sophocles, and these commentaries and scholia that are based in part on the erudition of the scholars of ancient Alexandria have been utilized by modern classical scholars in their work on the same authors.

We must also keep in mind an important fact concerning the history of the Greek language. Just as it happened with Latin in the West, the spoken language of the Byzantine Middle Ages for many centuries had moved far away from classical Greek, whether Attic or Hellenistic, and a student who wanted to read the classical authors had to learn first the grammar and vocabulary of classical Greek. And just as in the Latin West, there was in the East a continuous tradition of using as a literary language not the spoken or popular language but classical Greek, or at least a classicizing Greek resembling that of antiquity. Hence, the study of the classics was not merely prompted by historical or literary curiosity, but also by the practical requirements of linguistic and literary imita-

tion. Thus, we find handbooks of Greek grammar composed by Byzantine scholars for the use of students, whose spoken language was no longer classical Greek. It is, therefore, not a mere coincidence if the most important dictionaries of ancient Greek belong to the Byzantine period. The Byzantine scholars were also critical editors of classical texts in the proper sense of the word, and it is sufficient to cite the *Anthologia Palatina* or the *Bibliotheca* of Photios to remind us that we owe to these editions the preservation and transmission of these texts or at least of their summaries. If we add the textual criticism that is embodied in the Byzantine manuscripts and commentaries, and the historical, mythological, and rhetorical erudition that appears in the encyclopedias, it becomes obvious that Byzantine scholarship, with all its limitations, represents a flourishing and important period in the history of Greek studies and that the West had nothing comparable to offer either at the time of Roman antiquity or during the Latin Middle Ages. Moreover, in spite of its political decline and the continuous losses of important territories, the Byzantine Empire witnessed during its last centuries, and especially during the fourteenth century, a revival rather than a decline of classical studies. A large number of the best-known Byzantine scholars belong precisely to this late period. It is during that same period that we may notice for the first time a Western influence. Several Latin authors such as Cicero, Ovid, St. Augustine, and Boethius were translated into Greek for the first time, and some of these translations were made by authors such as Maximos Planudes, who was also one of the most learned students of classical Greek literature.¹⁰

If we keep in mind this flourishing state of philological studies in the East, we can easily understand why the Italian humanists, when they began to be interested in ancient Greek literature, had to turn toward Byzantium in order to obtain the texts and also the

10. For translations of Planudes, see Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, pp. 544-546. For the Greek translations of St. Augustine, see M. Rackl, "Die griechischen Augustinusuebersetzungen," in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle*, 1 (Studi e Testi 37, Rome, 1924): 1-38.

linguistic and philological knowledge required for reading and understanding them. We know of the first attempts made by Petrarch, who took Greek lessons from Barlaam of Calabria and acquired Greek manuscripts of Homer and Plato,¹¹ and of Boccaccio, who took Leonzio Pilato into his house and made him teach Greek in Florence and translate Homer into Latin.¹² Even more important was the arrival in Italy of Manuel Chrysoloras and his activity as a teacher in Florence and elsewhere.¹³ Among his pupils he counted some of the best humanists and Greek scholars of the early fifteenth century, and in spite of the short duration of his stay, his teaching had a lasting effect. This is attested to by the vast diffusion of the Greek grammar, which he composed for his Italian students, and by the work of his pupils; for example, the translation of Plato's *Republic* made by Uberto Decembrio and suggested and perhaps begun by Chrysoloras himself. With Chrysoloras begins, more than half a century before the fall of Constantinople, the exodus of Byzantine scholars to Italy, a movement that was to continue without interruption for several decades

11. E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 33-34 and 136; G. Gentile, "Le traduzioni medievali di Platone e Francesco Petrarca," in his *Studi sul Rinascimento* (Florence, 1936), pp. 23-88. Petrarch's manuscript of the medieval Latin version of Plato's *Phaedo* has been identified as Paris. lat. 6567 A by L. Minio Paluello (*Plato Latinus*, Vol. II [London, 1950], p. xii). Petrarch's Greek manuscript of Homer has been identified as Ambr. J 98 inf. by Agostino Pertusi (*Leonzio Pilato fra Petrarca e Boccaccio* [Venice and Rome, 1964], pp. 62-72), Petrarch's Greek Plato more tentatively as Paris. gr. 1807 by E. Pellegrin (*La Bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza, Ducs de Milan, au XV e siècle* [Paris, 1955], p. 310; cf. Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato fra Petrarca e Boccaccio*, p. 18).

12. A. Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato fra Petrarca e Boccaccio*. The fact that Pilato did not merely tutor Boccaccio but also was appointed by the city authorities of Florence "ad docendam grammaticam grecam et licteras grecas" and received a salary from 1360 to 1362 has been recently documented by Gene A. Brucker ("Florence and Its University, 1348-1434," in *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe, Essays in Memory of E. H. Harbison*, ed. Theodore K. Rabb and Jerrold E. Seigel [Princeton, 1969], pp. 220-236 at pp. 231-233).

13. G. Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'umanesimo*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1941-1954).

of Euripides with the *Hecuba*, and aside from the obvious reasons of facility and decency, there was also an element of school tradition. There is also a certain conception of learning that is reflected not only in the choice of the authors and texts to be read, but also in the grouping and connection of the subjects taught. The idea that poets and prose writers should form the subjects of different courses is also expressed in the school curriculum of the Latin Middle Ages, but the tendency to treat the philosophers, especially Plato but also Aristotle and the Patristic authors, together with the poets and orators was characteristic of the Byzantine school and seems to have influenced the Greek and perhaps even the Latin scholarship of the Renaissance humanists. I am inclined to think that the learning of the Renaissance humanists, in the extent and limitations of their interests as well as in their attitude toward the texts they studied had closer links with the Byzantine didactic tradition than with that of medieval scholasticism. These are rather minute observations, and at the present state of our knowledge they are hard to prove. Yet, I am convinced that they should and will be investigated as soon as our bibliographical knowledge of manuscripts and printed texts and our documentary knowledge of the universities and other schools will have become more complete than it is at present.

The fourteenth century saw only the first beginnings of Greek scholarship in Italy, whereas the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries brought about the full development of Greek philology in the West, a development that was largely due to the influence of Byzantine philology and of Italian humanism. Let us briefly indicate the diffusion of Greek learning during the Renaissance in its various aspects, and let us begin with the schools. During the first half of the fifteenth century, the teaching of Greek was still quite sporadic even at the major universities, but during the second half of the century, it became more or less continuous, and during the sixteenth century, it spread also outside of Italy. Among the teachers of Greek we encounter several Byzantine scholars of

Medici that occurred several decades after the Turkish conquest.²² Still in the sixteenth century, Francesco Patrizi collected Greek manuscripts in Cyprus and elsewhere and subsequently resold them to Philip II of Spain.²³ In other words, the trade in Greek manuscripts did not stop with the fall of Constantinople, and we should remember that after 1453 several areas of Greek speech and civilization, such as Euboea and Morea, Cyprus, Rhodes, and Crete, remained for shorter or longer periods under Venetian rule. The core of the great collections of Greek manuscripts in Europe goes back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the Laurentian and Vatican libraries and the Marciana, which had for its first nucleus the collection of Bessarion, were formed in the fifteenth century; the collections in Paris, the Escorial, Munich and Vienna in the sixteenth century; those in Oxford and Leyden shortly afterwards. Still at the present time the editor of ancient Greek texts must use the manuscripts in these libraries, as well as those that are still in the libraries of Greece and of the other Eastern countries that have or had close ties with the Greek Church and with Greek culture, such as Russia and Turkey. The Western collections of Greek manuscripts contain not only manuscripts written in Greece and later brought to the West. There are also some manuscripts written in Greek Italy and Sicily during the Middle Ages and a large number of manuscripts that were copied in the West itself from older manuscripts, as we learn from the dates and colophons of the manuscripts. They were mostly written by exiled Byzantine scholars who made their livings as copyists but also

22. K. K. Mueller, "Neue Mittheilungen ueber Janos Lascaris und die Mediceische Bibliothek," *Centralblatt fuer Bibliothekswesen*, 1 (1884): 332-412; B. Knös, *Un ambassadeur de l'hellénisme, Janus Lascaris, et la tradition gréco-byzantine dans l'humanisme français* (Uppsala and Paris, 1945).

23. E. Jacobs, "Francesco Patrizio und seine Sammlung griechischer Handschriften in der Bibliothek des Escorial," *Zentralblatt fuer Bibliothekswesen*, 25 (1908): 19-47; J.-Th. Papademetriou, "The Sources and the Character of *Del Governo de' Regni*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 92 (1961): 422-439 at 434-437.

words, we know to some extent the thought of Plethon and Bessarion, of Ficino and Pico. But aside from many aspects of the thought of these authors that remain still obscure or doubtful, we do not yet know the precise links that connect them with each other or with other earlier or later thinkers, and their sources and influences are still to a large extent unknown to us. Instead of trying to give a synthesis that would seem premature at this stage, I prefer to admit the preliminary character of our knowledge, and especially of my knowledge of the subject, and to indicate as clearly as possible the problems that are still in need of further investigation.

If we read some of the textbooks of the history of philosophy, we shall usually find them saying (or at least they did so until a few years ago) that the contrast between medieval and Renaissance thought in the West may be roughly described as a contrast between Aristotelianism and Platonism. Medieval scholastic thought was dominated by "the master of those who know,"³ whereas the Renaissance discovered "Plato who in that group came closest to the goal that may be reached by those whom heaven favors."⁴ This simple and pleasant formula has been demolished, as it happens, by the more detailed research of recent historians. We have learned that there was also during the Middle Ages a more or less continuous Platonist current⁵ and, on the other hand, that the Aristotelian school remained very strong throughout the sixteenth century and even underwent some of its most characteristic developments during that very period.⁶ Yet, in

ture tirés des registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 3 (1772): 531-554. None of these accounts is adequate or complete.

3. *Inferno*, IV:131.

4. *Trionfo della Fama*, III:4-6. Cf. P. O. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, 1964), p. 169.

5. R. Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages* (London, 1939).

6. B. Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence, 1958). J. H. Randall, *The School of Padua and the Emergence*

has recently come to be known as Middle Platonism.⁹ Apuleius was also the reputed translator of the dialogue *Asclepius*, the only complete source of Hermetism known to Western readers throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁰ In late antiquity the knowledge of Plato was strengthened by Calcidius' partial translation and commentary of the *Timaeus*, a work whose tremendous influence we can appreciate only now that we have an adequate critical edition of it.¹¹ The Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his school had its repercussions also in the Latin West. Aside from Victorinus and Macrobius,¹² we must mention especially St. Augustine, whose philosophical thought was much more deeply influenced by Plato and Plotinus than some of his recent theological interpreters are inclined to admit,¹³ and Boethius, whose widely read *Consolation of Philosophy* shows the impact of the same school. Compared with these strong elements of Platonism, the traces of Aristotle in the philosophical literature of Latin antiquity are rather meager. We note primarily a certain acquaintance with Aristotelian logic in Cicero and Augustine and, above all, in Boethius, who translated the first two treatises of the *Organon*, along with the Neoplatonist Porphyry's Introduction to the first treatise, and probably also the remaining parts of the same collection.¹⁴

Thus, we may easily understand why medieval philosophy and theology up to the twelfth century followed a strong Neoplatonic

9. Apuleius, *De deo Socratis; De Platone et eius dogmate*. Cf. W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1930).

10. *Hermès Trismégiste*, ed. A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière, Vol. II (Paris, 1945), pp. 296-355.

11. (Platonis) *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus* (*Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi*, ed. R. Klibansky, *Plato Latinus* IV), ed. J. H. Waszink (London and Leyden, 1962). The translation extends to p. 53c of the text.

12. For Victorinus, see now his *Traité théologique sur la Trinité*, 2 vols., ed. P. Henry and P. Hadot (Paris, 1960).

13. Cf. P. O. Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956), pp. 355-372.

14. *Aristoteles Latinus*, ed. G. Lacombe and others, *Codices*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1939-Bruges, 1961).

III Wimmer Lecture

6. Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition

There are several good reasons why I begin this lecture with a genuine feeling of hesitation. It is a great honor to me, and also a great responsibility, to give a lecture in a series in which I have had many distinguished predecessors, one which is intended for publication and sponsored by a religious order noted throughout its long history for its devotion to learning and for its high standards of scholarship. Moreover, I am going to speak about a subject which is difficult and highly controversial, and to which I hardly can hope to do justice in a single lecture. Aside from the limitations of my own knowledge, of which I am fully aware, the state of scholarship in this area is such that nobody can hope to summarize it in a satisfactory way, whereas generalizations widely accepted in the past no longer seem to be sufficient. I am sure the task would have been easier fifty years ago, at least in appearance; and it might be easier fifty years hence. All I can hope to do in giving one hour or little more to a theme that would really require a lengthy book, is to give you a general impression based on my own studies

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(which are quite incomplete and uneven) and to rearrange some familiar facts in a different perspective. I shall try to supplement in this lecture what I said on another occasion about the classical influences in Renaissance thought.¹ Yet, I cannot completely avoid repeating a few things I have said or written elsewhere since I cannot change at will the historical facts, or my opinions about them, in the course of a few years.

Although I consider myself a realist in metaphysics, I am a thorough nominalist in reference to several terms employed in historical discourse; therefore, I think it is necessary for me to define the meaning of the terms used in the title of this lecture. As you all know, the term Renaissance has been the topic of many debates and controversies and has been defined in a great variety of ways. As a result, the so-called problem of the Renaissance has become the subject matter of a whole literature.² I shall not attempt to enter into this debate today, but merely say that by Renaissance I mean roughly the period of Western European history between 1300 or 1350 and 1600. The controversies concerning the meaning of this period in Western history are partly due to national, religious, and professional ideals and preferences that have influenced the judgment of historians, and to the great complexity and diversity that belongs to the period itself and which will necessarily be reflected in the accounts of modern historians, depending upon those aspects which they choose to emphasize. The Renaissance includes many outstanding individuals who were very different from their contemporaries, but I do not think any individual ever can be said to speak for his age. There are great

1. *The Classics and Renaissance Thought*, Martin Classical Lectures delivered at Oberlin College (Cambridge, Mass., 1955). Reprinted with two additional papers under the title *Renaissance Thought* (New York, 1961).

2. See, among many other discussions, the symposium led by D. Durand and H. Baron and published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 (1943): 1-74; *The Renaissance* (New York, 1953 and 1962); *The Renaissance*, ed. T. Helton (Madison, Wis., 1961); H. Weisinger, "Renaissance Accounts of the Revival of Learning," *Studies in Philology*, 44 (1948): 105-118. For a comprehensive history of the Renaissance concept, see W. K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Boston, 1948).

national, regional, and even local differences; and it will make a great difference in our account of the period on which countries or cities we focus our attention. Still it makes some sense to stress the predominant role of Italy and of the Low Countries during the Renaissance³ and to acknowledge the fact that within the broader framework of European civilization, the cultural centers of gravitation lay in those parts, whereas in earlier or later periods it was located in France or in some other countries.

Moreover, within the larger Renaissance period that extends over several centuries there are different phases with distinct physiognomies; it is certainly true that the fourteenth century with Dante and even with Petrarch and Salutati was more medieval and less modern than the fifteenth with Bruni, Valla, and Alberti, or the sixteenth with Erasmus and Montaigne. Even within the same time and geographical area, different subjects and professions do not present a homogeneous picture. We do not find, and we cannot expect to find a parallel development in political and economic history, in theology, philosophy, and the sciences, in literature and the arts. In the Renaissance, just as in our own time or at any other time, we must be prepared to encounter a number of crosscurrents and conflicting currents even within the same place and time and subject matter. Certainly the spirit of the Renaissance to which some historians like to refer should be defined and demonstrated rather than merely asserted; and it would be wise to treat the unity of the period, not as an established fact, but rather as a regulative idea in the Kantian sense, something that may guide our investigations and that we hope to attain as a result of our studies, rather than as something we may take for granted at the beginning of our endeavors.

3. Two classical books on the fifteenth century, those of J. Burckhardt (*Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* [Basel, 1860, and many later editions]) and J. Huizinga (*The Waning of the Middle Ages*, tr. F. Hopman [London, 1924]), focus on Italy and the Low Countries respectively; and the considerable difference of their outlook derives to a large extent from this fact.

If my last statements may have sounded pleasing to the ears of medievalists, my next remark, I am afraid, will disappoint them. For what I have said about the Renaissance applies to an even larger degree to the Middle Ages, a much longer period of history generally taken to extend from 500 to 1300 or 1350. Although this is not frequently stressed, I cannot help noticing that the medieval period as a whole is as complex as the Renaissance, if not more so. Medieval culture is usually treated as a universal or international phenomenon, yet regional differences are by no means absent from it; the fact is merely concealed when a historian purporting to describe the history of the Middle Ages recounts in effect the medieval history of his own respective country.

Moreover, differences, for example, between the period of the barbaric invasions, the Carolingian age, and the twelfth or thirteenth century may seem even greater than those between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries; and in the thirteenth century, after the rise of the universities, the specialization of learning and the diverse development of different sectors of civilization was as great, or nearly as great, as during the Renaissance.

In other words, a single medieval tradition does not exist; rather, there are many different medieval traditions, some of them quite opposed to others. We should really speak of medieval traditions, in the plural, or define in each instance which particular medieval tradition we have in mind. If it is true that the Renaissance in many of its aspects may be linked with medieval precedents, as I shall tend to confirm in this lecture, it is equally true that those medieval phenomena which seem to foreshadow certain Renaissance developments did not necessarily occupy the center of the stage during their own period, or especially during that phase of the Middle Ages that immediately preceded the early Renaissance.⁴ Consequently, when we look for medieval precedents of

4. For example, classical humanism occupied a much more central position in the fifteenth century than did the *ars dictaminis* in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, although the latter may be considered to some extent

the Renaissance, we may see the Middle Ages themselves in a different perspective from the one we usually have when we consider the medieval period in its own terms and with reference to its own prevailing trends. Such a different perspective may be instructive, as long as we do not pretend that it is the only legitimate one, just as it has been instructive to view classical antiquity occasionally in medieval or Renaissance perspective, as distinct from its own ancient perspective, or from what the nineteenth and twentieth centuries took that perspective to be.⁵

Further, I should say a few words about the term tradition, which has been a favorite with many scholars, including myself. Lately, historians have tended to stress continuity in history and to emphasize the fact that, even after a radical change such as a revolution or conquest, certain features of the previous order were retained. Yet, we should not forget that there are discontinuities in history and that even continuity means continuity in change, not merely pure stability. Stability is inertia, which belongs to things, to institutions rather than to human beings. Nor is any phase of human history so perfect that it would be worth preserving in all its aspects, even if that were possible. One of the most obvious causes for change, one that is usually forgotten by sociologists, is the fact that human beings are mortal and are inevitably replaced by new persons and new generations. In the long run, it is these new persons who will decide how much of what they receive from their predecessors will be preserved or changed, abandoned or destroyed. Traditions should be preserved whenever they represent genuine values (not all of them do). But in order to be kept alive, they must be appropriated by new generations; and thus they are

as the predecessor of the former. Moreover, those historians who stress the medieval antecedents of Renaissance humanism are apt to find them in the twelfth rather than in the thirteenth century.

5. This was done on a large scale by E. R. Curtius (*Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* [Bern, 1948; Engl. trans., New York, 1953]). Cf. P. O. Kristeller, "Renaissanceforschung und Altertumswissenschaft," *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, 33 (1959): 363-369.

The humanists were engaged in transforming the entire system of secondary education and in imposing their scholarly and stylistic standards upon the other academic disciplines, and to some extent they succeeded. They did not, however, replace the traditional subject matter of these disciplines, although one of their latest and most brilliant representatives, the Spaniard Vives, also attempted to accomplish that.

As far as philosophy is concerned, the humanists considered moral thought their province. They produced a large literature of moral treatises, dialogues, and essays. The moral ideas of Petrarch and Alberti, of Erasmus and Montaigne, and many other scholars constitute the most direct contribution of Renaissance humanism to the history of Western thought.

Leaving aside a number of important specific ideas which are the property of individual humanists rather than of the entire movement, the main contribution of Renaissance humanism seems to lie in the tremendous expansion of secular culture and learning which it brought about in the areas of literature, historiography, and moral thought. This development was not entirely new and to some extent may be traced back to the later Middle Ages; but it did reach its climax during the Renaissance.

There is some justification in the statement that the humanist program and contribution was in its core cultural rather than philosophical. It omitted several problems and areas that form an integral part of philosophy as previously or commonly understood, and it included many subjects such as literature and historical scholarship that are usually not considered a part of philosophy. Yet, in our time, when many people take the praise of the sciences as a substitute for philosophy, we might forgive the humanists for having done the same with the humanities. And, after all, there are philosophical problems and implications in the humanities as there are in the sciences.

The concern of Renaissance humanists with the classics and secular learning led many contemporary critics and modern his-

torians to label them as pagan, but this charge can hardly be sustained in the light of our present information. If we call Alberti pagan for not referring to Christian sources in his moral writings, we should have to say the same about Boethius. It is fashionable now in certain popular circles to maintain that our entire spiritual and moral heritage is due to what is called the "Judaeo-Christian" tradition. Such a claim reveals an abysmal ignorance of the real history of Western thought. For the roots of many of our basic ideas lie in Greek philosophy; these ideas have never ceased to exert a direct influence and have been themselves assimilated in various ways into the Jewish and Christian traditions.²⁹

It is now time for us to say a few words about the medieval tradition of Christian theology and about its transformation during the Renaissance. The origin and rise of the Christian religion, the development of its main theological doctrines, and its synthesis with the literary and philosophical traditions of the Greeks and Romans still belong to the later phases of classical antiquity. This process was almost completed before the beginning of the Middle Ages. Christianity and Catholicism are no more medieval than they are ancient or modern. Whereas nobody would deny that religion and theology played a dominating role in the Middle Ages, it has become increasingly clear that medieval thought and learning were never completely limited to theology. Even in the early Middle Ages grammar and the other liberal arts were studied apart from theology, though usually as a preparation for it. During the

29. S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1942); Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950); F. C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (New York, 1962); E. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, ed. F. C. Grant (New York, 1957). Ch. N. Cochrane (*Christianity and Classical Culture* [London, 1944]) credits the Church fathers and even St. Augustine with philosophical originality on many points where they actually depend on Stoic or Neoplatonic sources (see my review in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 41 [1944]: 576-581). The literature on the classical influences on the Church fathers is far too large to be cited in detail.

high Middle Ages theology itself underwent important changes.³⁰ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the study of logic and dialectic began to expand at the expense of grammar and rhetoric, especially in the schools of Northern France; the forms of the question and of the commentary became more fully developed; and the new method of logical argument was applied to the subject matter of theology. This is the precise meaning of the term "scholastic theology"; and the attitude of John of Salisbury or of St. Bernard of Clairvaux shows that its rise met with resistance even among scholars of unquestioned intellectual and religious integrity.

Another change that accompanied this development was the effort to transform Christian doctrine from scattered pronouncements of Scripture, the Councils, and the Church Fathers into a coherent and systematic body of statements. This process culminates in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the leading theological textbook of the subsequent centuries, and in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, theology came to be taught at Paris and other universities alongside with other learned disciplines; it tended to abandon its previous reliance on the writings of St. Augustine and to ally itself to an increasing degree with Aristotelian philosophy. St. Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Johannes Duns Scotus, William of Ockam, and the Averroist Siger of Brabant represent different types and phases of this Aristotelianizing theology. †

When we pass from the late Middle Ages into the Renaissance, we note that the traditions of scholastic or Aristotelian theology were vigorously continued. The theological schools of Thomism, Scotism, and Ockamism all had numerous followers. It can be

30. M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der katholischen Theologie* (Freiburg, 1933; repr. Darmstadt, 1961); A. M. Landgraf, *Einführung in die Geschichte der theologischen Literatur der Frühscholastik* (Regensburg, 1948); J. de Ghellinck, *Le mouvement théologique du XII e siècle*, 2d ed. (Brussels and Paris, 1948).

shown that during that period Thomism began to exert a much greater influence outside the Dominican order than during the thirteenth or fourteenth century.³¹ It has been shown that Luther's theology was influenced by the strong Ockamism of the German universities of the fifteenth century,³² and it has now become fashionable to call him a medieval thinker. On the other hand, Catholic theology experienced a strong revival during the sixteenth century after the founding of the Jesuit order and the Council of Trent, especially at the Universities of Spain and Portugal; and this revival is linked in many ways with the ideas and methods of St. Thomas and other medieval theologians.³³

It would be a mistake, however, to overlook the impact of the humanist movement upon Renaissance theology. Those humanists who were explicitly concerned with theological questions (and we might as well call them Christian humanists) were by no means opposed to religion or theology as such, but they criticized scholastic theology in the name of simple piety and religious scholarship in accordance with their own ideals. They preferred St. Bernard to the scholastics, considered the Church Fathers as the Christian classics, insisted that they were grammarians rather than dialecticians in the medieval sense, and advocated the direct study of Scripture. They also proceeded to apply their new methods of philological and historical scholarship to the textual study and interpretation of Scripture and early Church writers.³⁴

31. F. Ehrle, *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia* (Münster, 1925); R. Garcia Villoslada, *La Universidad de Paris durante los estudios de Francisco de Vitoria* (Rome, 1938).

32. R. H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, 1950); H. A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

33. M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der katholischen Theologie* (Freiburg, 1933); C. Giacon, *La seconda scolastica*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1944-1950); F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. III (Westminster, 1953).

34. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, ch. 4; E. H. Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (New York, 1956); P. Polman, *L'élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVI e siècle*

This humanist approach to theology may be traced from Petrarch to Erasmus, and it left a powerful impact upon Catholics and Protestants alike. Even Luther is not untouched by it, whereas it is easy to discern its influence in Melancthon and Calvin as well as in some of the Spanish theologians.

The Renaissance may have produced some scholars and thinkers who were indifferent to Christianity or estranged from some of its teachings. But as a whole, the period is far from being un-Christian as it has sometimes been represented. Certainly the term Christian philosophy, which has recently been used to characterize medieval thought,³⁵ would have been more easily understood by some of the Renaissance humanists than by the medieval scholastics. It is Erasmus who speaks of the Philosophy of Christ, as Justinus Martyr had done in the second century.³⁶ Thomas Aquinas could not and did not use this phrase. For him theology was Christian, to be sure, but philosophy was Aristotelian; and the question was not to substitute Christian for Aristotelian philos-

(Gembloux, 1932); A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance* (New York, 1924).

35. Especially by E. Gilson (*L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale*, 2d ed. [Paris, 1944]; *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* [New York, 1955]). I do not deny, of course, that the medieval philosophers were Christians and that their philosophy, for this and other reasons, must be distinguished from that of their Islamic and Jewish contemporaries. Yet to my knowledge the term "Christian philosophy" is not used by any of the medieval thinkers whom Gilson has in mind, and this fact seems to me significant.

36. Erasmus uses the terms (*philosophia Christi*/ and *philosophia Christiana* repeatedly, especially in the prefaces of his *Enchiridion* and of his edition of the *New Testament* (*Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. A. M. and H. Holborn [Munich, 1933], pp. 5-7, 9, 139ff.). For Justinus Martyr, the crucial passage is found in the *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ch. 8, Vol. I, ed. G. Archambault, (Paris, 1909), p. 40: *διαλεγόμενος τε πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ ταύτην μόνην εὕρισκον φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ σύμφορον. οὕτως δὲ καὶ διὰ ταῦτα φιλόσοφος ἐγώ.* For the idea in Justin and other early Apologists, see M. V. Engelhardt, *Das Christentum Justins des Märtyrers* (Erlangen, 1878), pp. 223-231; C. Clemen, *Die religionsphilosophische Bedeutung des stoisch-christlichen Eudaemonismus in Justins Apologie* (Leipzig, 1890); J. Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. I (Utrecht, 1950), pp. 196 and 220.

ophy, but to determine their relationship and to reconcile them as far as possible.

This problem of the relationship between philosophy and theology continued to preoccupy the thinkers of the Renaissance as it had worried Thomas Aquinas and the other scholastics. The very existence of the problem shows that, contrary to frequent modern claims, philosophy in the thirteenth century, if not before, was distinct from theology, though subordinate and not opposed to it. In the fourteenth century, even at Paris, the teaching of philosophy was more and more divorced from theology; and the prevailing tendency among philosophers was to recognize the basic superiority of theology, but to assert at the same time the relative independence of philosophy within its own domain. It is the position which Siger of Brabant took, and it is usually referred to as "Averroism" or as "the doctrine of the double truth."³⁷

The Italian Aristotelians of the Renaissance, such as Pomponazzi, inherited this position from their medieval predecessors.³⁸ On the other hand, Renaissance Platonists emphasized the harmony between religion and philosophy and thus came closer to the position of St. Thomas, although they tended to grant philosophy more equality and independence than medieval theologians would have done.³⁹ This is a nice example of the inadequacy of labels usually employed in historical discourse about these subjects and of the fact that there are several medieval traditions and several Renaissance philosophies. Each Renaissance philosophy has different medieval sources and antecedents; and even if we succeed in establishing the right connections, the presence of a link

37. E. Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (Paris, 1852); P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIII e siècle*, 2d ed. (Louvain, 1908-1911); S. MacClintock, *Perversity and Error: Studies on the "Averroist" John of Jandun* (Bloomington, Ind., 1956).

38. B. Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano* (Rome, 1945); Nardi, *Saggi sull'Aristotelismo Padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence, 1958).

39. P. O. Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* (Florence, 1953), pp. 18-20; 346-349.

does not mean that a given system of thought occupied the same place within its own time as its predecessor had done within the previous period.

We can touch but briefly upon another branch of learning which had great importance both during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but which for a variety of reasons had but tenuous connections with the mainstream of philosophical thought during those periods: jurisprudence. In the earlier Middle Ages, study of both civil and canon law was somewhat submerged and seems to have been largely carried on within the broader framework of the seven liberal arts. After the eleventh century, the study of canon law underwent a development similar to theology: it was subjected to the new methods of dialectic, and it received a systematic order and arrangement in Gratian's *Decretum* and other great canonist collections.⁴⁰

In the case of civil law the main fact, aside from dialectical method, was the adoption of the Roman *Corpus Iuris* as the authoritative textbook of instruction at Bologna and other law schools and its reception as a valid law code in Italy and elsewhere.⁴¹

When we pass from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, we note an unbroken continuity of legal teaching as well as a voluminous body of legal commentaries, questions, and opinions (*consilia*) which for the later period have been hardly sorted, let alone studied, and are sometimes treated by historians as if they did not exist.

Aside from this legal tradition, often referred to as *Mos Italicus*, because it was most strongly represented at the Italian law schools,

40. J. F. von Schulte, *Die Geschichte der Quellen und Literatur des canonischen Rechts*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1875-1880); S. Kuttner, *Reperitorium der Kanonistik*, Vol. I (Vatican City, 1937); J. de Ghellinck, *Le mouvement théologique au XII e siècle*, 2d ed. (Brussels and Paris, 1948).

41. F. K. von Savigny, *Geschichte des roemischen Rechts im Mittelalter*, 2d ed., 7 vols. (Heidelberg, 1834-1851); H. Kantorowicz, *Studies in the Glossators of the Roman Law* (Cambridge, 1938).

Renaissance humanism had a strong impact on jurisprudence, which culminated in the sixteenth century under the name of *Mos Gallicus*. Its main tendency was to replace the abstract dialectical method of the medieval jurists with a philological and historical interpretation of the sources of Roman law. If the ties between legal practice and the Roman law were reportedly weakened as a result of this development, historical understanding of the Roman law certainly made tremendous progress.⁴²

The philosophical significance of the legal tradition lies primarily in the area of political thought; and it is significant that some of the leading political thinkers of the sixteenth century, such as Jean Bodin, had received legal training.⁴³ We may add the concept of natural law, in important notion which originated in Stoic philosophy and was introduced from Stoic sources into the very text of the Roman law.⁴⁴ When adopted by St. Augustine, it was reinterpreted in a Neoplatonic fashion⁴⁵ and bequeathed in this form to Thomas Aquinas and other medieval theologians. The revival of this doctrine in the seventeenth century owes much to the legal and theological thought of the sixteenth century. It is now fashionable to consider the doctrine of natural law as antiquated, but I do not see how we can ever subject a given positive law to moral criticism unless we maintain a universally valid moral standard by which it may be judged and measured.

42. G. Kisch, *Humanismus und Jurisprudenz* (Basel, 1955); the same, *Erasmus und die Jurisprudenz seiner Zeit* (Basel, 1960); D. Maffei, *Gli inizi dell'umanesimo giuridico* (Milan, 1956).

43. P. Mesnard, *L'essor de la philosophie politique au XVI e siècle* (Paris, 1936, repr. 1951).

44. The beginning sentence of Chrysippus' treatise on law has been preserved because it was inserted verbatim in the *Corpus Iuris* (Dig., I, 3, 2, citing "Marcianus libro primo institutionum"). Cf. H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Vol. III (Leipzig, 1903), p. 77, no. 314 (who mentions Marcianus, but not the *Corpus Iuris*).

45. *De ordine*, II, 8, 25. *De vera religione*, 31, 58. *De libero arbitrio*, I, 6. Cf. E. Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin*, 3d ed. (Paris, 1949), p. 168. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II ae, qu. 91-95. Cf. also Gratian, *Decretum*, Dist. I, C.7.

The scientific traditions of the Middle Ages which we must mention, at least in passing, have been the subject of many recent studies; they have also played a central role in the often heated controversies about the relation between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and about the merits and contributions of these two periods.⁴⁶ I should like to stress that in my opinion there is no such thing as Science with a capital S, but that there is a variety of different sciences, each with its own tradition and historical development. Only two sciences, or groups of sciences, had from antiquity a separate history that was relatively, if not entirely, independent of philosophy: medicine, and the mathematical disciplines including astronomy.

The early Middle Ages inherited but a small share of the rich heritage of ancient Greek medicine. Medical theory was usually treated as an appendix to the seven liberal arts, and medical practice was often exercised by people without learning or formal theoretical training.⁴⁷ The main changes occurred again during the twelfth century. A sizable body of more or less advanced medical treatises were translated from Greek and Arabic and adopted as textbooks for medical instruction. At the same time, medical theory underwent the influence of scholastic logic and found its literary expression in commentaries and questions. The school of Salerno, which in an earlier period had originated as a society of

46. P. Duhem, *Etudes sur Léonard de Vinci*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1906-1913); E. Moody, "Galileo and Avempace," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12 (1951): 163-193, 375-422; M. Clagett, *Giovanni Marliani and Late Medieval Physics* (New York, 1941); Clagett, *The Science of Mechanics in the Middle Ages* (Madison, Wis., 1959); A. Maier, *Die Vorläufer Galileis im 14. Jahrhundert* (Rome, 1949); Maier, *An der Grenze von Scholastik und Naturwissenschaft*, 2d ed. (Rome, 1952); *Zwischen Philosophie und Mechanik* (Rome, 1958); A. C. Crombie, *Augustine to Galileo* (London, 1952); E. Rosen, "Renaissance Science As Seen by Burckhardt and His Successors," in *The Renaissance*, ed. T. Helton (Madison, Wis., 1961), pp. 77-103.

47. L. C. MacKinney, *Early Medieval Medicine* (Baltimore, Md., 1937); H. E. Sigerist, "The Latin Medical Literature of the Early Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 13 (1958): 127-146; A. Beccaria, *I codici di medicina del periodo presalernitano* (Rome, 1956).

the so-called quadriyium. The actual content of this instruction was extremely elementary, however, compared with the achievements of Greek antiquity; this fact is not surprising if we remember that the ancient Romans themselves had but a modest part, if any, in these achievements.⁵⁰

The rise of mathematical and astronomical studies in the West is linked also with the translations of Greek and Arabic scientific writings made during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Building on these foundations, the medieval scientists absorbed Euclidean geometry, Arabic algebra, Ptolemaic astronomy, and at least part of Archimedian mechanics, making independent contributions, especially in the field of mechanics, as has been emphasized in recent studies.⁵¹

Yet, it appears certain that some of the most advanced Greek treatises on mathematics were translated only in the sixteenth century and that the same century witnessed the first marked advances beyond the ancients, such as the solution of cubic equations as well as the new astronomy of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, and Kepler.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Galileo had taken the crucial step that was to be the foundation for early modern science, that is, the application of mathematical methods to the subject matter of physics, which up to that time had been treated as an integral part of Aristotelian philosophy. If we wish to insist that medieval scholars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had anticipated some of these developments, a claim that has by no means been accepted by all competent students of the subject,⁵² we should not blame the humanists for having delayed the progress of science for a hundred years, but rather study the much neglected

50. W. H. Stahl, *Roman Science* (Madison, Wis., 1962).

51. G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, 3 vols. (Baltimore, Md., 1927-1948); M. Clagett, *The Science of Mechanics in the Middle Ages* (Madison, Wis., 1959).

52. A. Koyré, *Etudes Galiléennes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1939); E. Rosen (see note 46 above). A. Maier also makes fewer claims than Duhem or others.

work of the mathematicians, astronomers, and Aristotelian physicists of the fifteenth century, especially in Italy. Obviously, they must have been the transmitters of fourteenth-century lore to the sixteenth century.⁵³

We can merely mention the steady progress made in such fields as technology and geography since they are hardly connected with philosophy and depend largely upon practice and experience. In the case of geography, it is worth noting that the best Greek sources, Ptolemy and Strabo, were translated for the first time by fifteenth-century humanists.⁵⁴ These translations were extremely popular and they probably helped to develop the interest in travels and explorations which culminated in the discovery of the New World.

Before we proceed to the other sciences and to the Aristotelian philosophy of which they formed a part, we must discuss briefly the so-called pseudosciences, that is, the occult tradition. Long ridiculed as a monument of medieval superstition, these disciplines have now been recognized as close companions of the contemporary sciences. Whatever occasional opposition they met with was based on religious rather than scientific grounds.⁵⁵

The development of the various disciplines, especially astrology, alchemy, and magic, was not identical. Intellectually, astrology was the most respectable and had its precedents in late antiquity, whereas alchemy and magic were more practical and depended largely on Arabic authorities. All these studies may have found

53. M. Clagett, *Giovanni Marliani and Late Medieval Physics* (New York, 1941); J. H. Randall, *The School of Padua and the Emergence of Modern Science* (Padua, 1961); Randall, *The Career of Philosophy: From the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (New York, 1962); Curtis Wilson, *William Heytesbury* (Madison, Wis., 1956).

54. D. Durand, "Tradition and Innovation in Fifteenth Century Italy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 (1943): 1-20. "Strabo," by A. Diller and P. O. Kristeller, in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* II, ed. P. O. Kristeller and E. F. Cranz (Washington, 1971), pp. 225-233.

55. See the monumental work by L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols. (New York, 1923-1958).

Returning from the occult to the genuine sciences, we encounter at the same time one of the two great philosophical traditions, Aristotelianism. For the study of physics as well as biology was pursued during the later Middle Ages as an integral part of Aristotelian philosophy, in the same manner as logic, ethics, or metaphysics.

The greatness of Aristotle as a philosopher was generally recognized throughout later antiquity, yet his most important systematic writings apparently remained unpublished for several centuries after his death. He left behind an organized school which flourished for a long period. His chief works were made the subject of detailed commentaries by members of this school and later by the Neoplatonists, who held Aristotle in great respect and tended to combine his teachings with those of Plato and of the Platonist tradition. Yet, it was only among the Arabs that Aristotle acquired predominant authority to the extent that other Greek philosophers were excluded. There he became known as "the philosopher."

From antiquity, the earlier Middle Ages had inherited Boethius' translations of the first two treatises of the *Organon* along with Porphyry's introduction to the *Categories*. This group of writings was called *Logica Vetus* and formed the basis of logical study and teaching until the end of the eleventh century. The bulk of Aristotle's writings, along with those of his Arabic commentators and several Greek commentators, was translated into Latin only during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵⁸ When the medieval univer-

Gods (New York, 1953); E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 1958).

58. *Aristoteles Latinus, Codices*, ed. G. Lacombe and others, 3 vols. (Rome, 1939—Bruges and Paris, 1961); L. Minio Paluello, "Jacobus Veneticus Graecus: Canonist and Translator of Aristotle," *Traditio*, 8 (1952): 265–304, and many other papers published by the same scholar in the *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* and elsewhere. Fundamental are still the chapters contributed by the late Mons. A. Pelzer to the first two volumes of M. De Wulf's *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale*, 6th ed., I (1934): 64–80 and II (1936): 25–58, of which the second is omitted in the English translation of Vols. I and II by E. C. Messenger (London, 1935–1938). Of

sities reached their full development during the thirteenth century, the works of Aristotle were adopted as standard textbooks for the philosophical disciplines. Philosophy was thus taught for the first time in the West as an independent discipline distinct from the liberal arts and theology; and it is no coincidence that the modern terms for several philosophical and scientific disciplines correspond to the titles of those works of Aristotle that were used as textbooks: physics, ethics, metaphysics.

Through these works of Aristotle, the West acquired not only a large body of specific problems and specific ideas, but also a developed terminology and a strict method of reasoning as well as a systematic and reasonably complete framework within which all relevant problems could be treated and discussed. The study of biology, and especially the great work done in physics during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was due, as we know, to students and interpreters of Aristotle. In many instances they departed from the text and doctrine of Aristotle and developed theories of their own, such as the *impetus* theory of projectile motion.⁵⁹ It is now widely agreed that the Paris Aristotelians of the fourteenth century took the first steps in the realm of physics that prepared the way for early modern science, although opinions differ much concerning the extent to which they anticipated the work of Galileo and Newton.⁶⁰ If Galileo was partly indebted to the work of the Aristotelian school, as he seems to have been, this was caused by the influence of the Aristotelian tradition which flourished at the Italian universities during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁶¹ For the Italian Aristotelians of the Renaissance

Messenger's "definitive" translation only the first volume has appeared (New York, 1952).

59. A. Maier, *Zwei Grundprobleme der scholastischen Naturphilosophie*, 2d ed. (Rome, 1951).

60. See notes 46 and 52 above.

61. See note 53 above and also A. Koyré, *Etudes Galiléennes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1939). For the influence of Buridan in Italy, see G. Federici Vescovini, "Su alcuni manoscritti di Buridano," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 15 (1960): 413–427.

from Cardano and Telesio to Bruno and Campanella consistently opposed the authority and doctrine of Aristotle and attempted to develop new systems of the physical universe to replace that of Aristotle and his school.

Yet, it was Galileo alone who succeeded in placing physics on a firm new foundation which was mathematical and experimental in nature. With him, the Aristotelian tradition in physics came to an end, whatever his partial indebtedness to it may have been.⁶⁴ Although we cannot claim Galileo as a representative of the Renaissance, there is no doubt that his work was at least as much indebted to Renaissance thought as to medieval Aristotelianism and more specifically to new developments in mathematics and astronomy that occurred during the sixteenth century, and to the recently increased knowledge of Plato and Archimedes.⁶⁵

Whereas in physics the end of the Renaissance brought about an anti-Aristotelian revolution, the effects of which are still felt to the present day, Aristotle's authority continued to prevail throughout the Renaissance and into the eighteenth century in the field of biology. This does not mean that the Renaissance acquired no new knowledge in this area. It is enough to remember the study of the hitherto unknown flora and fauna of the Western hemisphere, which was described with great care and attention. Yet, leading biologists tried to fit new facts into the familiar pattern of Aristotelian biology, rather than working out new concepts or theories.

After discussing those Aristotelian disciplines that have become independent sciences in modern times and are no longer treated as parts of philosophy, we must consider those subjects which are still considered the proper domain of philosophy. The field of logic,

64. E. Moody, "Galileo and Avempace," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12 (1951): 163-193, 375-422.

65. A. Koyré, *Etudes Galiléennes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1939); E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, Vol. I, 3d ed. (Berlin, 1922); Cassirer, "Galileo's Platonism," in *Studies and Essays in the History of Science, Offered in Homage to George Sarton* (New York, 1946), pp. 276-297. For so-called Pythagorean influences, see also E. Frank, *Plato und die sogenannten Pythagoreer* (Halle, 1923).

with which we might suitably begin, was the only philosophical discipline of Greek origin that occupied a place in the scheme of the seven liberal arts, which dominated the school curriculum of the earlier Middle Ages. The study of logic was based on the *Logica Vetus*, to which we had occasion to refer, and hence retained a rather elementary character for a long time. Yet, the rise of early scholasticism, which began during the latter part of the eleventh century in the French cathedral schools, was largely due to an increased study of logic and the tendency to apply the more refined methods of logic to other learned disciplines, including theology. With the new translations of the twelfth century, the West acquired the more advanced logical writings of Aristotle, especially the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*; and thus a new foundation was laid for logical investigations during the subsequent period.

The thirteenth century saw also the beginnings of a further development beyond Aristotle in logic which was associated with the name of Peter of Spain: terminism.⁶⁶ In the fourteenth century advanced logical studies flourished especially in England. The work of what we might call the first Oxford school of logic consisted in a highly technical formal doctrine which centered on forms of inference, on fallacious arguments, and on interesting attempts to develop logical and even quantitative formulas for degrees of quality, and for the gradual transition from one qualitative stage to another.⁶⁷

Usually overlooked is the fact that the Oxford tradition of late medieval logic enjoyed a tremendous vogue at the Italian univer-

66. J. P. Mullally, *The Summulae Logicales of Peter of Spain* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1945); I. M. Bochenski, *Formale Logik* (Freiburg and Munich, 1956), Engl. trans. by Ivo Thomas, *A History of Formal Logic* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1961); E. A. Moody, *Truth and Consequence in Mediaeval Logic* (Amsterdam, 1953); Ph. Boehner, *Medieval Logic* (Chicago, 1952).

67. Curtis Wilson, *William Heytesbury* (Madison, Wis., 1956). For the later repercussions of the medieval logical tradition see also Neal W. Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York, 1960).

Whereas physics and logic were the main philosophical disciplines which every student supposedly studied, metaphysics and ethics were considered elective courses. Hence the impact of Aristotle's work in these fields was less extensive, a fact which is apt to surprise the modern student.

The tradition of Aristotle's metaphysics is closely linked with that of theology, as we might expect; but it would be wrong to consider the two disciplines identical. Since Aristotle himself applies the term theology to at least a portion of the subject matter of this work, it was easy to consider it as a treatise on "natural" theology. Yet, the study of Aristotelian metaphysics was not the same as the study of Christian theology on the basis of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* or of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa*. The difference lay in the subject matter as well as in the method and sources of knowledge. If we wish to show a link between Renaissance thought and the tradition of Aristotelian metaphysics, it is sufficient to point to some of the problems which continued to be discussed, or even acquired a greater importance. The discussion concerning the immortality of the soul, which occupied a central place in the thought of the later fifteenth and of the earlier sixteenth century, involved the interpretation of Aristotle as well as that of Plato; the controversy between Pomponazzi and his opponents illustrates this fact abundantly. The question of the superiority of the intellect and of the will was debated not only by the followers of St. Thomas and of Duns Scotus, but also by several humanists and by the Platonists of the Florentine Academy.⁷⁰ If the problems were the same, however, the solutions often differed, and even where solutions sound alike, significant differences exist in the arguments, in the emphasis given to various aspects of a problem, and in the reasons why a given problem is discussed or solved in a certain manner.

70. Kristeller, "A Thomist Critique of Marsilio Ficino's Theory of Will and Intellect," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, English Section Vol. II (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 463-494; Kristeller, *Le Thomisme et la pensée italienne de la Renaissance* (Montreal, 1967), pp. 104-123.

The role of Aristotle's *Ethics* was more complex and perhaps more important. Prior to the thirteenth century, writings on moral subjects were largely influenced by Cicero, Seneca, and Boethius; by theological conceptions; and by popular codes of conduct such as those of chivalry. With the rise of scholasticism and of the universities during the thirteenth century, moral philosophy became a formal academic discipline for the first time in the West, based on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, and to a lesser extent on his *Rhetoric* and the *Economics* attributed to him.

Since the humanists considered moral philosophy part of their domain, it was in this field, rather than in logic or physics, that the impact of humanism on philosophical thought was felt most immediately. Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Economics* were the first of his writings for which the humanists supplied new translations;⁷¹ and it was Bruni's version of the *Ethics* which kindled the first great debate about the relative merits of medieval and humanist translations—a debate in which modern historians have continued to take sides.⁷² In his humanist garb, Aristotle as a moral philosopher found many adherents among Renaissance humanists, and it is no coincidence that the humanists continued to use Aristotle's *Ethics* as a textbook in their courses on moral philosophy. Yet, many of them preferred to combine Aristotle's ethical views with those of other ancient philosophers in an eclectic fashion whereas others opposed or ignored Aristotle's ethics in favor of Stoic, Epicurean, or other views.⁷³

It has become apparent, I hope, that the influence of Aristotle was not a unified phenomenon. This influence, and the reaction

71. Cf. Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron (Leipzig and Berlin, 1928); E. Garin, "Le traduzioni umanistiche di Aristotele nel secolo XV," *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Fiorentina di Scienze Morali "La Colombaria,"* 16 (N.S. 2, 1947-1950): 55-104. Cf. the articles by J. Soudek cited above.

72. Kristeller, *Studies*, pp. 340-341.

73. Kristeller, "The Moral Thought of Renaissance Humanism," in *Renaissance Thought*, II: 20-68.

against it, differed greatly between the various philosophical and scientific disciplines which he treated in his various writings. It is interesting to point out that Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, the former practically unknown during the Middle Ages, the latter largely treated as a work on moral philosophy, became prominent as textbooks of literary theory only during the sixteenth century.⁷⁴ They attained a position of authority in the later sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, that is, at the same time when his authority in physics came to be criticized and finally overthrown.

In trying to sum up the rather complex subject of Aristotle in the Renaissance, it might be best to state that the Aristotelian traditions of the later Middle Ages (especially in the fields of physics and of logic) were continued; that there developed, alongside with them, a new humanistic Aristotelianism that was based on new translations and had its center in ethics, rhetoric, and poetics; and finally, that there was a rising tide of anti-Aristotelianism which consisted of several quite different waves, scored a certain amount of success in logic, and gradually prepared the way for the destruction of Aristotelian physics in the seventeenth century.

Before I begin to speak of the other great philosophical tradition of Western thought, Platonism, I must admit that I am partial to it; and that the manner in which I understand and describe it, and even the historical importance I attach to it may be influenced by this partiality. Compared with the humanist or Aristotelian traditions, Platonism cannot be easily described in institutional terms. It is intangible in a sense, but no less important or pervasive.

In classical antiquity Plato's school was the one that had the longest span of life, and his writings were widely read at all times even outside the precincts of that school. The early Middle Ages

74. For the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the sixteenth century, see B. Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1962); and esp. B. Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1961). An analogous study for his *Rhetoric* has not yet been undertaken, as far as I know.

inherited from the Romans only a fragmentary translation of the *Timaeus*,⁷⁵ but a number of Latin writers transmitted in more or less precise form many teachings of Plato and his school: Cicero, Boethius, and above all, St. Augustine, who always spoke with respect of the Platonists and, in spite of his unquestioned piety and originality, was indebted to them for many of his philosophical ideas. The continuity of the Platonic tradition during the Middle Ages, which has been studied and emphasized extensively in recent years,⁷⁶ depends to a considerable extent, although not entirely, on the authority and influence of St. Augustine and his writings. This fact acquires additional significance if we remember that in early scholasticism, prior to the introduction of Aristotle, and outside the field of logic, St. Augustine was the chief source and inspiration of philosophical as well as of theological thought for the good reason that he was probably the greatest Latin philosopher of classical antiquity. X X

There were, however, other factors in addition to the influence of St. Augustine. The writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, composed by a Christian mystic strongly influenced by Neoplatonism, had been repeatedly translated since the eighth century⁷⁷ and exercised a continuous influence on medieval theology. The greatest thinker of the Carolingian age, Johannes Scotus Eriugena, was a Neoplatonist in his general orientation. In the school of Chartres, where early scholasticism attained perhaps its highest development, cosmological speculation drew heavily on Plato's *Timaeus* and on his Latin commentator Calcidius. Moreover, the great wave of translations made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries included at least two more works of Plato, the

75. *Timeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, ed. J. H. Waszink (*Plato Latinus*, ed. R. Klibansky, Vol. IV) (London, 1962).

76. R. Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages* (London, 1939, repr. 1950); Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, ch. 3.

77. *Dionysiaca*, 2 vols. (Paris and Bruges, 1937) where all known Latin translations are given in parallel columns, along with the Greek text.

Phaedo and the *Meno*, and several works of Proclus, among them his important *Elements of Theology* and his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* which incorporates part of Plato's text.⁷⁸

During the thirteenth century, Augustinianism and Platonism receded before the rising tide of Aristotelianism. Yet, the Franciscan school of theology maintained at least in part an Augustinian orientation; and we have recently learned that even St. Thomas Aquinas not only preserved important elements of Augustinianism in his theology, but also borrowed several concepts of his philosophy from the newly translated works of Proclus.⁷⁹ In the early fourteenth century, a German Dominican composed a bulky commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*⁸⁰; Master Eckhart, another Dominican whose work inspired all later medieval currents of mysticism in Germany and the Low Countries, derived many of his basic ideas from Proclus and from the Areopagite.

It is against this background that we must understand the Platonism of Cusanus, Ficino, and other Renaissance Platonists. We know that Cusanus read Proclus and Dionysius⁸¹; and it is

78. *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi, Plato Latinus*, ed. R. Klibansky, 4 vols. (London, 1940-1962); Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 1933, rev. 1963); Procli Diadochi *Tria Opuscula*, ed. H. Boese (Berlin, 1960), cf. my review in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 54 (1962): 74-78. "Procli Elementatio Theologica translata a Gulielmo de Moerbeke," ed. C. Vansteenkiste, *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, 13 (1951): 263-302, 491-531.

79. The Platonism of Aquinas is emphasized by A. Little (*The Platonic Heritage of Thomism* [Dublin, 1949]), and played down by R. J. Henle (*Saint Thomas and Platonism* [The Hague, 1956]). Yet, other studies have shown that Aquinas' doctrine of participation is influenced by Proclus and occupies a significant place in his thought. See L.-B. Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris, 1942); C. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan, 1939; 2d ed., Turin, 1950; 3d ed., Turin, 1963); Fabro, *Participation et causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain, 1961).

80. Proclus, ed. Dodds, p. xxxii; Klibansky, *The Continuity*, p. 28.

81. E. Vansteenberghe, *Le cardinal Nicolas de Cues* (Paris, 1920), esp. pp. 413-416 and 436-438. See also Nicolaus de Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, ed. E. Hoffmann and R. Klibansky (Leipzig, 1932) for references given in the apparatus and in the index.

to that of his versions of Plato and of Plotinus.⁸⁸ It was in this context that Augustinus Steuchus, a Catholic theologian of the sixteenth century strongly committed to the Platonic and pseudo-Platonic tradition in philosophy, coined the term *philosophia perennis* and adopted it for the title of his main work.⁸⁹

I surely do not wish to endorse the fantastic views held by the Renaissance Platonists about Hermes Trismegistus and other ancient sages, but I would suggest that the Platonic tradition deserves the name of a *philosophia perennis* no less than other traditions which have since appropriated this title for themselves. However that may be, the name and its underlying conception show that Renaissance Platonism was fully conscious of being part of a tradition and clearly realized that this tradition, although of ancient origin, had had a more or less continuous life during the Middle Ages. We may thus say that the theme of our lecture receives an explicit confirmation through the historical interpreta-

88. Kristeller, *Studies*, p. 223.

89. Augustinus Steuchus, *De perenni philosophia*, in 10 books, with a preface to Paul III (Lyon, 1540; repr. Basel, 1542). The edition of 1552, cited in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, does not exist; I examined the respective copy which has the shelf mark R 1782, and it turned out to be a copy of the 1542 edition, in which the Roman numeral X on the title page had been erased, making the year MDXLII appear as MD LII with a blank space. It is also included in the author's *Opera omnia* (Paris, 1578; Venice, 1591, 1601). In the edition of 1591 the text appears in Vol. III, f. 1–207v. Agostino Steuco was born in Gubbio ca. 1497 and died in Venice in 1548. In 1538 he was named Prefect of the Vatican Library and Bishop of Kisamos in Crete by Paul III. See *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 32 (Rome, 1936): 726 (by G. Riciotti); *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, 11 (Vatican City, 1953), cols. 1332–1333 (by G. Paparelli); Th. Freudenberger, *Augustinus Steuchus* (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 64–65, Münster, 1935); A. S. Ebert, "Agostino Steuco und seine Philosophia perennis," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 42 (1929): 342–356, 510–526; 43 (1930): 92–100; Julien Eymard d'Angers, "Epictète et Sénèque d'après le *De perenni philosophia* d'Augustin Steuco (1496–1549)," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 35 (1961): 1–31; Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27 (1966): 505–532; Schmitt, "Prisca Theologia e Philosophia Perennis: due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna," in *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro*, ed. G. Tarugi (Florence, 1970), pp. 211–236.

tion which the Renaissance Platonists gave of their own work and achievement.

In summary, we may say that during the Renaissance philosophical thought, without abandoning its theological connections, strengthened its link with the humanities, the sciences, and we may add, with literature and the arts, thus becoming increasingly secular in its outlook. The partial continuity of medieval traditions, the introduction of new sources and problems, and the gradually increasing quest for new solutions and original ideas makes the Renaissance an age of fermentation rather than an age of synthesis in philosophy. When philosophy and the physical sciences made a fresh start in the seventeenth century, they consciously abandoned both the traditions of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Yet, it could be easily shown that Renaissance philosophy shared in preparing the way for these changes and that its influence persisted in many areas of European thought until the eighteenth century.⁹⁰

I hope that this summary and general talk may offer you an example of the continuity of a living tradition which is at the same time in a process of steady transformation. The thought of the Renaissance, considered as a whole, worked with some of the old material supplied to it by medieval thought but produced out of it something new and different which expressed its own insights and aspirations.

The concept of tradition which finds its expression in the idea of a *philosophia perennis* may still serve us as a model and guide. Our Western philosophical tradition has a long history; and I hope and believe that it has a future, although this future may be within

90. Matthias Meier, *Descartes und die Renaissance* (Münster, 1914); L. Blanchet, *Les antécédents historiques du "Je pense, donc je suis"* (Paris, 1920); J. Politella, *Platonism, Aristotelianism and Cabalism in the Philosophy of Leibniz* (Philadelphia, 1938); E. Cassirer, *Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* (Leipzig, 1932); Engl. trans. by James Pettegrove, *The Platonic Renaissance in England* (New York, 1955).

the framework of a broader and more comprehensive world culture than we have yet known. This *philosophia perennis* will include not only the thought of the Middle Ages but also that of antiquity, the Renaissance, and the best of modern thought—not only because it happens to be there, but because it contains a core of truth which we cannot afford to lose. This *philosophia perennis*, in my view, will include Plato and Aristotle, St. Augustine and St. Thomas, Spinoza and Leibniz, Kant and Hegel, and many others. Some of their ideas may be refuted or forgotten, some of their writings may even be lost. For every idea in its material expression is subject to destruction, just as are works of art or cities. I am deeply distressed as anyone by the amount of destruction that we have experienced in our time or that we may face in the future. Yet, I take comfort in the thought that a valuable portion of past life and experience is preserved by history and by tradition. And if I may be allowed to conclude with a personal confession, I believe that nothing that once was can be completely undone. Even if destroyed in the material world and forgotten by men, it remains and will remain alive in the memory of an infinite being for which the past as well as the future is always present, and that is thus the greatest, the only true historian, and the keeper of the eternal tradition of which even our best human traditions, to use a Platonist phrase, are but shadows and images.

been defined and understood in a variety of ways, but it also has constantly changed its relations and connections with other important areas of knowledge or of human concern such as literature, the arts and religion, the sciences and the historical and scholarly disciplines. A history of philosophy that merely records the antecedents of one particular type of philosophy which happens to be endorsed by the author is obviously not sufficient, although such histories have often been written ever since the time of Aristotle and obviously have their own interest when the author and his position are significant in themselves. What the historian of philosophy should aim at, although he may not actually attain his end, is evidently a comprehensive study of all philosophical positions held in the past and also of all meanings which philosophy has had in the past, including many that are greatly different from the ones commonly held today. This task may seem so comprehensive and so vague that the history of philosophy might be thought to coincide with the entire history of human thought, including all scientific and religious, all literary, and even all popular thought. I do not believe that we have to go quite that far. I think we are entitled to set off philosophy in a specific and technical sense from the much broader area of human thought of which it is evidently a part. Philosophy in the specific sense may be defined as the attempt to think coherently and methodically about the whole of reality or experience, or about particular problems with conscious or at least implicit reference to this whole. By its method, it distinguishes itself from popular or literary thought and, by its intended universality, from the scientific or scholarly disciplines which are concerned with solving specific problems. In addition to its method and scope, Western philosophy is also defined by its tradition which goes back to the Greeks. We believe that, in spite of differences of opinions, of problems, and of terminology, there is a continuity in the history of Western philosophy from the early Greek philosophers to the present. Every philosopher is a part of this tradition, and is knowingly or unknowingly indebted at least to

a part of this tradition. This tradition is held together by a common effort, by common problems and themes, and by common criteria of argument and of validity. It contains a large number of true insights, in addition to many errors, and even the errors may be understood as failures in a continuing effort to attain the truth. The history of philosophy does not show a steady accumulation of valid knowledge as the history of the sciences does, but it shares with it the mixture of truth and error, even in the work of the most distinguished thinkers, and the corresponding task of separating the two and of understanding them both. The history of philosophy is not a history of errors, as the positivists believe, nor a history of truth, as Hegel thought, but a history of the quest for a truth which is always attained but in parts, and always present as a goal even in the midst of errors. These are the assumptions which underlie the task of the history of philosophy and which I happen to share, though I know that they cannot be demonstrated or argued for: philosophy has a specific method and function, and a specific and continuous tradition, and the insights formulated within this tradition are partly true, and even where false, are understandable with reference to a truth at which all philosophers have been aiming. If a philosopher is willing to accept these assumptions, as I think he should, and to admit that the philosophical truth attained or aimed at by his predecessors is of intrinsic interest to him, then it follows that the study of the history of philosophy is a genuine part of the task of philosophy. Vice versa, on account of these assumptions, the philosopher can bring to the study of the history of philosophy something that no historian of literature or of another discipline can bring (unless he has also acquired a training and stake in philosophy), namely, an understanding of philosophical texts and opinions in terms of their relevance to philosophical enquiry. This does not mean that the historian of philosophy should ignore the relations between philosophy and other areas of human experience. He will have to pay attention to the religious, literary, and scientific influences to which philosophical thought was subject in

thought. Conventional labels that used to be employed more frequently in the past than in current discussions, such as pantheism or nominalism or Platonism and the like, have to be examined as to the degree of their validity or usefulness, especially since the historian obviously cannot dispense completely with terms of a general nature not found in the writings he is discussing. The question arises whether a historian of philosophy should aim at an objective interpretation of the thinkers he is studying or at a critical analysis frankly dependent on his own philosophical assumptions and opinions. I am personally convinced that he should aim at both, but that the two tasks should be kept separate and that the objective interpretation should precede the critical discussion. Yet, we may very well wonder whether an objective interpretation is altogether possible or whether it can be neatly separated from the subjective critique. I am enough of a Kantian to consider it important that complete objectivity should be maintained as a goal, though we may never succeed in fully attaining it. And if it is fashionable to stress "commitment" rather than truth, I wonder why the primary commitment of the philosopher, and of the historian, should not be to truth, as it has always been, meaning that the search for truth should steadily continue for the very reason that truth has never been fully attained.

There is another even more fundamental problem that is posed by the very existence of the history of philosophy and that has been keenly felt by many thinkers ever since Hegel. Every past philosophical thought obviously has a temporal element which is "dated" and which is due to the personality of the thinker, to the time in which he lived, and to the influences to which he was exposed. On the other hand, the views of a past philosopher must be interpreted, at least in part, as meaningful and intelligible, if not as true, and in this respect every past thought has an eternal dimension that detaches it from the accidental circumstances of the time in which it was expressed and makes it present to the

interpreter who belongs to a different time and speaks a different language. If we deny this eternal element in philosophical thought, we retain of past thought nothing but its factual surface, and it loses any relevance that it might otherwise have for our own quest for truth. We are thus driven into the position of relativism or historical skepticism, a position which has also been called historicism and with which several distinguished historians and philosophers have struggled. The problem of historicism in this sense seems to me much more serious and meaningful than the question that has been recently debated under the same label, and once more the arbitrary limitation of terminology has served to block and to conceal certain fundamental problems rather than to solve them.

It is now time to state as briefly as possible what seems to be the accepted meaning of the history of ideas. This kind of inquiry has been admirably illustrated both in theory and practice by Arthur Lovejoy, and there have been a large number of books and papers published in the last twenty years or so that seem to fall under this description. The term "history of ideas" is of comparatively recent origin, if I am not mistaken. It is related to such expressions as intellectual history or history of thought, and perhaps is indebted to the German "Geistesgeschichte." The term "idea" has had a long history of its own from Plato through Locke to current thought and language. When we talk about the history of ideas, we presumably refer to concepts or terms that have a definable or describable meaning and are used in a linguistic context, and also to opinions or statements which include or presuppose those terms or concepts. It should be noted that the term "history of ideas" is not the equivalent of Geistesgeschichte, the main difference being the use of the plural "ideas," instead of the German "spirit." Whereas the German notion of "spirit," due to its Hegelian antecedents, suggests in each instance a complex system of thought within which any particular idea or term is determined and defin-

able with reference to all others and to their common source, the English term "ideas" suggests an indeterminate plurality of particular thoughts or notions that are not related to each other by any definable logical or even historical connection. In other words, the American term is free from certain systematic premises of its German counterpart and hence more flexible, but in turn it is at least in danger of losing a precise philosophical and even historical context. For this as well as for other reasons, another term such as history of thought might be preferable. Another ambiguity in the "history of ideas" consists in the fact that concepts as well as terms are a part of its subject matter. At the hands of a master such as Lovejoy, the complicated interplay between thoughts and words would receive adequate attention, but less skillful practitioners are tempted to forget (and certain contemporary modes of thinking would encourage this oblivion) that thoughts and words, ideas and terms are related but not identical. It is possible for the same idea to reappear under a different name, and for the same name to acquire completely different connotations. The historian of the "idea" of rhetoric might be led to believe that this idea has vanished since the late eighteenth century because the term has become unpopular with most writers and a use of dictionaries or indices would not always tell him that the same idea, though somewhat transformed, continues or reappears under such different names as English style or literary criticism. Vice versa, key terms such as nature or "idea," reason or art, have undergone such radical transformations that it is often difficult to write a coherent history of their development.

Now the history of ideas has no doubt turned out to be an extremely fruitful and interesting field of inquiry, and it is greatly to be desired that philosophers and other scholars should continue to pursue it and to make contributions to it. Yet, when the question is asked whether the history of philosophy should be considered identical with, or a part of, the history of ideas, I am strongly

inclined to answer it in the negative. I would gladly admit that the two fields of inquiry overlap and have certain topics and methods in common. That part of the history of philosophy which consists of the history of problems, concepts or terms as used by different philosophers at different times evidently belongs to the territory of the history of ideas. However, there is a large and important area which belongs to the history of philosophy, but not to the history of ideas—above all, the monographic treatment of the entire thought of a given philosopher, as well as the comprehensive account of the development of philosophy as a professional discipline during a shorter or longer period or through the course of its history. On the other hand, the history of ideas is not only cultivated by historians of literature, of the arts, of the sciences, and of religion, in addition to the historians of philosophy, but its very subject matter comprises not only the thoughts and ideas of professional philosophers, but also those less systematically or clearly expressed ideas which we find in literature and in art, in religious and in popular thought, and these latter ideas evidently fall outside the field of the history of philosophy as we have tried to define it. We may even say that the very same philosophical thoughts and ideas receive a different treatment from a historian of philosophy than from a historian of ideas if the latter is not at the same time also a historian of philosophy. The historian of philosophy will stress the relation of a given idea to the entire context of the thought of the philosopher who expresses it, and to that of his contemporaries, predecessors, and successors in the history of professional philosophy. A historian of ideas who does not have a primary concern with philosophy will treat the same ideas rather within the context of the surrounding nonphilosophical thought with which they may be more or less closely connected. I am especially dissatisfied with the treatment several aspects of Renaissance philosophy have received from historians of comparative literature who tend to misjudge the originality or significance of certain Renais-