

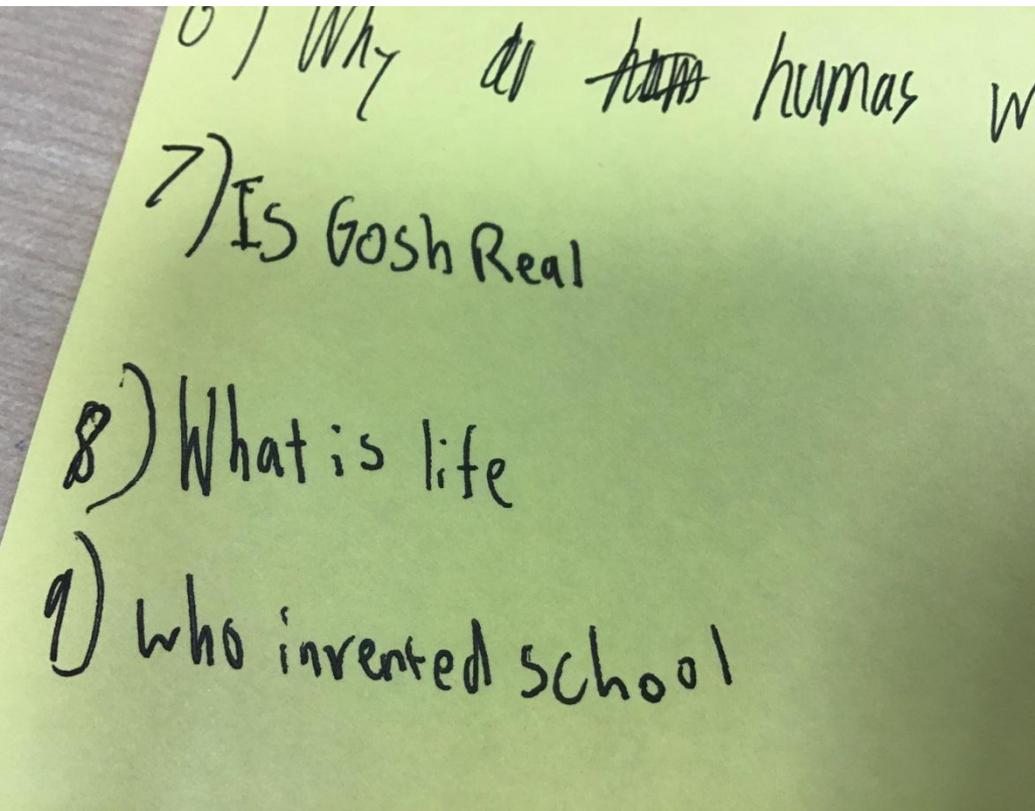
PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONING

MAJOR TRENDS IN RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY

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Monterey Peninsula College
GENT 8/408: Late Renaissance and Reformation (1520-1600)

Philosophical questions



- What happens when we die?
- Why are we here?
- How does one live the good life?
- What is the good society?
- Who are we? What does it mean to be human?
- Where did we come from?
- What is beauty? Truth? God?

Humanism

- Study of classical antiquity
- A shift in focus from exclusive study of religion towards the study of humankind
- Returning interest in the pagan classics stimulated three major shifts in European philosophy:
 - ▣ the philosophy of secularism
 - ▣ the appreciation of worldly pleasures
 - ▣ Assertion of personal independence and individual expression
- Crossroads between medieval supernaturalism and modern skeptical and scientific paradigms

Sixteenth century natural philosophy

- Century before the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century
- Renaissance Natural Philosophy: defies simple definition (Don't want to over simplify)
 - Reducing it to continuation of medieval science:
 - Conflation of 15th-16th century Natural Philosophy into mere continuation of medieval philosophy
 - Interpreted as conservatism (either “medieval” or “classical”)
 - “Looking Forward”/ False Teleology:
 - pressing it into false teleology which is completed in the Scientific Revolution
 - Mere “foundation” or “precursor” to modern science
 - Sometimes ignores importance of “sciences” like astrology, alchemy, and magic.

Illustration of an alchemy workshop in Johann Mylius, *Opus Medico-Chymicum*, 1618

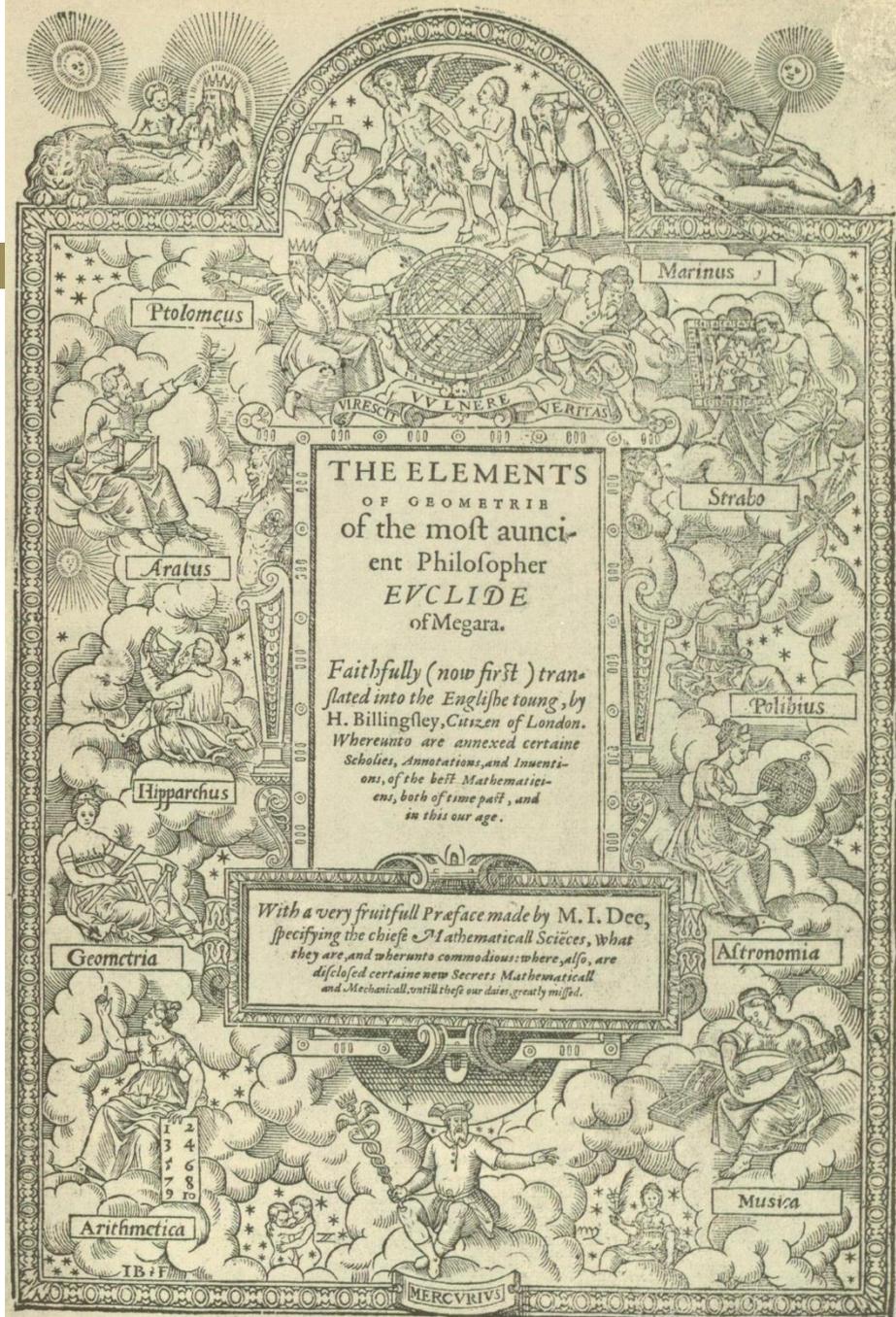


John Dee

1527-1608/9

- Court astrologer to Elizabeth I
- Mathematician, occultist, astronomer, alchemist
- Straddled science and magic (but would not have felt a distinction between the two)

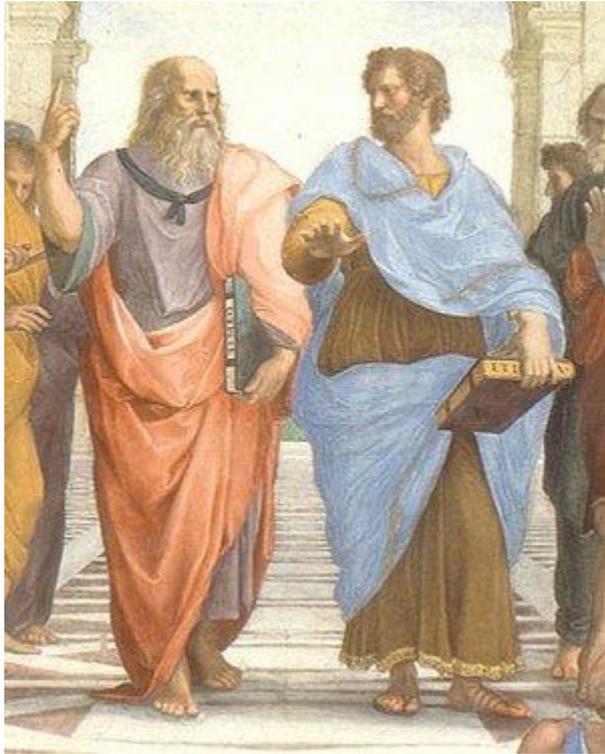
"A marveilous newtrality have these things mathematicall, and also a strange participation between things supernaturall and things naturall."



John Dee's Angelic Conversations

- In the late sixteenth-century, John Dee and Edward Kelly began their “angelic experiments”: attempts to communicate with angels.
- Believed there was a connection between the material world and the suprasensory world.
- Would attempt to discover the location of the Spanish Armada for Elizabeth.

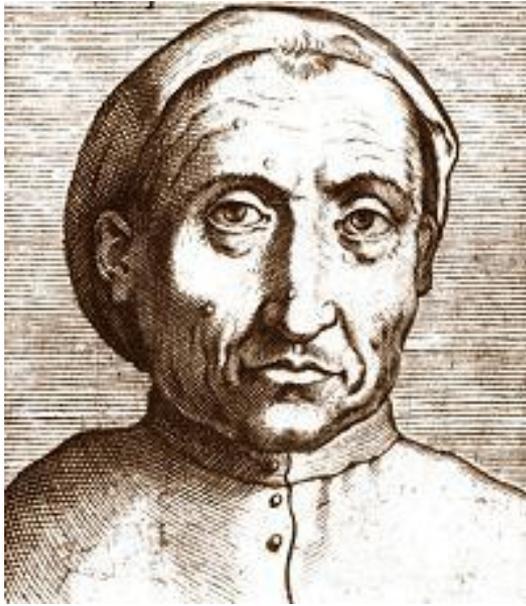
The beginning of separation from Natural Sciences and Philosophy



- Plato's philosophy didn't wane in influence
- Brought together as part of the fifteenth century Neo-Platonic project.
- Creation of clear distinction between Aristotle and Plato.
- Plato: thinker of metaphysical realities, theology
- Aristotle: perceived as thinker of metaphysical realities; investigator of the physical world.

Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525)

Removing the Theological from Aristotle



- Pietro Pomponazzi read Aristotle for secular/scientific reasons → removal of focus on theological.
- Developed his philosophies entirely from the field of natural philosophy
- *Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul*, 1516: If some part of the intellect is to survive the body's death, then there must be evidence in the action or activity of the intellect → must function independently of the body.
 - ▣ No Independence found
 - ▣ Intellect always mediated by sense impression
 - ▣ Therefore, according to Aristotelian principles, the soul dies with the body

Jacopo Zabarella (1533-1589)

Aristotle and the Scientific Method

- Jacopo Zabarella → wrote prolifically on the subject of the scientific method and the nature of logic
- Aristotle's authority should be subject to rational criticism and should be independent of theology.
- Goal: Discovery of the authentic Aristotelian ideas of science and the scientific method → unarguable demonstration of nature and principles of the natural world.
- *Regressus*: method developed that he believed was the best method for reaching knowledge in the theoretical sciences.
 - *Combination of the deductive methods of composition and the inductive methods of resolution*
- *Opera logica* (1578): mainly devoted to the theory of demonstration
- *De rebus naturalibus* (1590): major work in natural philosophy → helped a renewal of natural philosophy, methodology, and theory of knowledge.

The Study of the Human



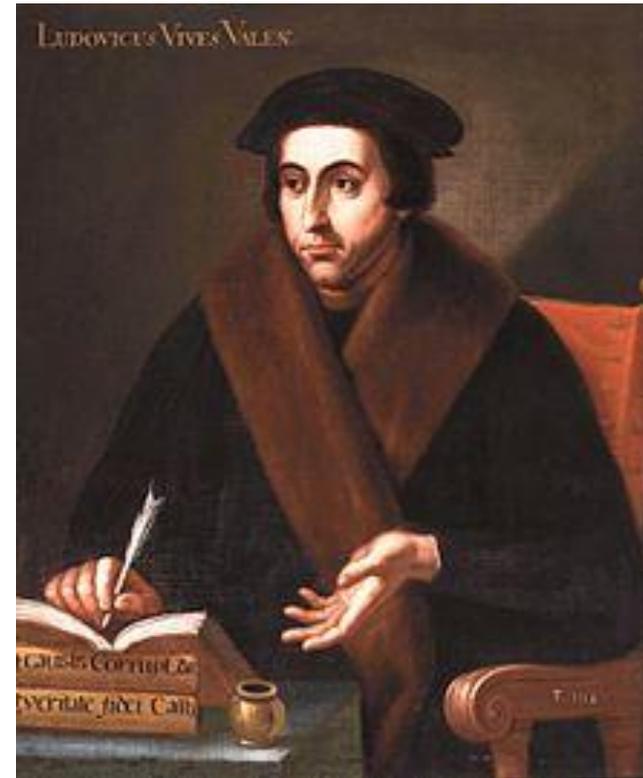
Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica*, 1504

- 16th century: mixture of scholastic and humanist traditions.
- Development of more human centered disciplines.
- Creation of new vocabulary:
 - “Psychology”: Study of the human soul.
 - Coined by Marko Marulić, d. 1524 – Croatian poet and philosopher
 - “Anthropology”: study of relationship between body and soul – both comprising human nature.

Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540)

The Father of Modern Psychology

- Many philosophers in the sixteenth century interested in Aristotle's idea of the soul as operating on two axes:
 - ▣ Emotions and desires (sensitive-intellective)
 - ▣ The Will (cognitive-appetitive)
- However, Juan Luis Vives (Humanist, scholar, philosopher), explored an alternative to Aristotle's model of psychology
 - ▣ Rejected metaphysical approaches to the soul
 - ▣ Emphasizes understanding the soul through its functionality
 - ▣ We do not have the intellectual ability to completely grasp what the soul is.



Two competing Scottish views on Witchcraft

The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1587

Reginald Scot, Edinburgh

- Skeptical of the reality of witchcraft, sorcery, magic
- Attempted to prove that magicians were charlatans
- The persecution of witches was un-Christian

Daemonologie, 1597

James VI of Scotland

- Witches, sorcery, magic (learned or unlearned) was Satanic
- Threatens the nation-state, anarchic
- No place for sorcery in learned institutions

John Dee and the Ascension of James VI of Scotland, James I of England

- Death of Elizabeth, John Dee's patron
- Ascension of James VI of Scotland, 1603
- New and more hard-lined approach to the uses of magic in universities and in courts



- Effect:
 - ▣ Magic and science no longer continuous in the courts → magic no longer used politically
 - ▣ Much less commonplace in the universities (this is also to do with other trends)