SPECTERS OF RENAISSANCE:

A NOTE ON A RECENT VOLUME ON RENAISSANCE SCHOLASTICISM*

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In his well-known *History of Italian Philosophy*, first published in 1945, Eugenio Garin maintained that « the greater expression of the philosophical thought of the 15th century was due to a group of thinkers who, gathering in Florence around the Medici, retained for themselves the task of confirming the truths of Platonism [...] ».[1] This statement led to two problematic conclusions: on the one side, the unequivocal identification of 'Renaissance philosophy' with the revival of Platonism in Florence; and on the other side, a sharp rupture between 'Aristotelian' sholasticism and 'Platonic' Renaissance philosophy. A substantial body of scholarship published over the last few decades has sought to demonstrate that the reality was far more complex than what Garin portrayed.

The framework of relations between scholastic thought and Renaissance philosophy has been the object of deep investigation and debate. Whereas in the past – at the time of Garin – the notion of a radical rupture was generally favored, today we are enough engaged in the philological and doxographical study of the sources to acknowledge that philosophy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could arise thanks to some form of engagement – whether critical or laudatory – with earlier thought.[2] The difficulty, rather, has shifted toward a different kind of

* Review of AMOS EDELHEIT, *Renaissance Scholasticism. Fighting back*, Brill, Leiden 2025 (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 247). I want to express my gratitude to the many friends and colleagues who accepted to read this long review-article and gave me useful feedback on it.

1 EUGENIO GARIN, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, Vallecchi, Firenze 1945 [eng.transl. by Giorgio Pinton, *History of Italian Philosophy*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2008, vol. I, p. 329].

2 This point was recognised also by EUGENIO GARIN, « Giovanni Gentile interprete del Rinascimento », *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 1-2 (1947), p. 117–128: 121: « Per intendere a pieno questo delicato rapporto bisogna, forse, abbandonare lo schema della frattura come antitesi e salto brusco (immanenza/trascendenza; libertà/necessità; natura/spirito), ed esplorare insieme le nascoste parentele tra l'ultima Scolastica e il primo Umanesimo, in cui la

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inquiry: namely, the task of identifying differences alongside continuities between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.[3]

The volume edited by Amos Edelheit fits within this line of inquiry. It comprises ten chapters, each focusing on a distinct episode in the cultural life of the Renaissance, with the aim of highlighting both elements of continuity and moments of rupture with scholastic thought. Nine of these chapters adopt specific focus on singular episodes or authors. They will therefore be discussed first, insofar as they present highly targeted research and debates that update the current state of scholarship in this field (section I). The opening chapter, by contrast, offers a broader perspective on the nature of Renaissance philosophy as such. Given the importance of this chapter from a general perspective, it will deserve a specific analysis in the second part of the present article (section II).

I. *Review of the Chapters*

Chapter 2, authored by Peter Howard, reassesses fifteenth-century Florence from the perspective of scholastic philosophical and theological traditions. The Florentine *Studium*, founded in 1348 and reorganized in 1473, is here presented as an institution with its own specific dynamics, not merely a provincial echo of the University of Paris. Its development depended on the city's particular urban, civic, and religious fabric, and was led by two central Dominican figures: Antonino Pierozzi (1389–1459) and Bartolommeo Lapacci Rimbertini (1402–1466). Pierozzi, who served as *regens* of the *Studium*, tried to employ his scholastic background to shape public religious life. In the civic life of Florence speculative theology acquired a practical dimension, especially in discussions of charity (p. 39). Howard focuses in detail on the impact of theological debates and instructions on the citizenship, and on the development of a new lexicon and argumentation which could reach this peculiar audience (e.g. with the use of the vernacular). In this respect, Howard understands scholasticism both as a set of principles and as a mental habit, asking how Florentine preaching adapted scholastic thought to the local cultural climate and to the *studia humanitatis*.

Pierozzi's *Summa theologiae* is a clearly scholastic work, yet it also integrates grammar and rhetoric, reflecting humanist influences. As a proof of this, Pierozzi

polemica è, spesso, come ogni polemica, lotta dei figli contro i padri, degli scolari contro i maestri ».

[3] In this respect I completely agree with John Monfasani, « The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages », in Id., *Renaissance Humanism, from the Middle Ages to Modem Times*, Routledge, London 2015 (Variorum Collected Studies Series), p. 165–185: 185: « The almost desperate urge to find 'the modern us' in the Renaissance in contradistinction to the backward 'other' of the Middle Ages is as unfruitful and silly as the reciprocal tendency to view the Renaissance as hardly more than a glossy veneer masking the continuation of medieval superstitions and deplorable health conditions ».

defended the study of pagan authors as a legitimate aid to knowing God, and he praises Leonardo Bruni's Greek translations, even drawing material from the *Historia florentina* (p. 63). According to Howard, scholasticism in fifteenth-century Florence should be understood as an intellectual posture open to a broad cultural world, not as a method confined to university classrooms. Pierozzi and Rimbertini stand as examples of scholasticism shaped by civic impulses and urban cultural life.

The chapter also opens the floor to further potential investigation. Howard reads the dynamic of integration of humanism and scholasticism, or the rediscovery of texts, and the civic diffusion of theology, as specific to Florence. Yet similar processes characterized other Italian and Iberian centers such as Rome, Venice, Ferrara, Salamanca. Furthermore, the analysis, which now relies mainly on two Dominican witnesses, could benefit also from the comparison with some others Franciscan cases (e.g. Bernardino da Siena). A fuller comparison with the wider Italian landscape of political and intellectual life would nuance the claim that Florence alone exemplifies this civic-rooted scholasticism.

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Chapter 3, authored by Marian Michèle Mulchahey, examines the relationship between humanism and the medieval scholastic tradition through one of the most emblematic figures of the Florentine Renaissance: the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498). The opening claim (p. 67) stresses that humanism cannot be reduced to a purely literary movement tied to Greek studies and detached from philosophy. This raises a broader question – left implicit by the author – regarding the degree to which traditional philosophical practice intersected with the vast new wave of Greek rediscovery and translation, and what impact this had on teaching and commentary within late fifteenth-century intellectual life.

Savonarola is a good example of this interaction between humanism and scholasticism. He taught logic, natural philosophy, and Thomistic theology. Even though he lacked the explicit traits commonly attributed to a humanist, he nonetheless engaged with the humanist world: he refined his Latin style and employed new rhetorical strategies (p. 71). His early education in the school of Battista Guarino in Ferrara implies exposure to the Greek-oriented pedagogical reforms of that school – an important point that ought to be emphasized, especially regarding contacts with Greek scholars and new philological approaches. Nonetheless, some textual features suggest that Savonarola may have deliberately avoided Latin literary sources, distancing himself from some humanistic obsession with classical eloquence.

Our understanding of Savonarola's didactic writings relies on the Borromeo Codex preserved at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (p. 79). These works show references to traditional scholastic authorities – both Dominican and Franciscan –

while also displaying direct engagement with Aristotle. The Aristotelian doxography is not merely cited as authoritative statements but is actively discussed and confronted (p. 87). In the conclusion, Mulchahey highlights Savonarola's continuity with the long durée of scholasticism and its enduring mental habits. Such continuity should not surprise us: Savonarola was deeply embedded in the highly structured Dominican theology (one should remember that the university of Padua even maintained a chair *in via Thomae*). Hence, Savonarola's chronological position late in the fifteenth century does not diminish his scholastic background: his use of sources, questions, and argumentative methods remain firmly scholastic.

The chapter aims to show the influence of scholasticism on a 'non-medieval' thinker but, if one has to say the truth, Savonarola appears in fact rather scholastic. The merit of this chapter is to situate Savonarola within the broader transformation of late-fifteenth-century intellectual culture, where scholastic habits coexisted with – and were increasingly reshaped by – the philological and philosophical innovations emerging from the Greek revival.

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Chapter 4, authored by Amos Edelheit, addresses a crucial issue in the study of Renaissance philosophy: namely, the role of Marsilio Ficino in the intellectual transformations of the fifteenth century. Engaging directly with Kristeller's interpretation of Ficino, Edelheit argues that a thinker's philosophical training cannot be distinguished from his reading practices: indeed, one cannot study a Renaissance philosopher by neatly dividing the context of their education from the texts they later read and assimilated, because these two dimensions are intrinsically interwoven (p. 116). This insight forms the basis for a broader reconsideration of what Renaissance philosophy actually was.

Edelheit then articulates a pivotal point of the volume: the revival and assimilation of ancient pagan philosophy – in all its phases, languages, and genres – was mediated through scholasticism. The transmission of Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew philosophical materials impacted on a system of concepts and method which had been consolidating for over two centuries. Thus, to understand Renaissance philosophy is to understand how this long-standing pattern of philosophical practice absorbed and reinterpreted new theoretical inputs made available by the humanists. The Renaissance, therefore, should not be imagined as a clean break with the Middle Ages, but rather as a period of intensive interaction between an established intellectual framework and unprecedented textual discoveries.

Edelheit rejects the widespread assumption that scholasticism was a static and outdated relic. Rather, he emphasizes its dynamism: scholasticism continuously evolved, adapted, and responded to new intellectual challenges. Far from

disappearing in the fifteenth century, scholasticism remained the dominant philosophical tradition across European universities. What we habitually call the Renaissance unfolded *within* scholastic culture rather than *after* it. In turn, Edelheit prompts further questions: How did scholasticism transform during the fifteenth century? Under what pressures? Through which actors and institutions? The chapter points toward these larger issues, though it focuses on a specific case: Ficino's early *Summa philosophiae*.

Edelheit examines one of Ficino's earliest philosophical works, the *Summa philosophiae*, preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Moreniana, cod. Palagi 199 (datable to 1454–1455). The chapter does not explicitly mention the broader intellectual context, but this is essential for the analysis: indeed, those years coincide with the height of the 'Plato-Aristotle Controversy'. George of Trebizond had just completed his polemical treatise against Theodorus Gaza concerning the translation of the *Problemata*, and in the following year he finalised his *Comparatio*, a hard-hitting defense of Aristotle's supremacy over Plato. Ficino's first philosophical notes are to be set within this atmosphere of doctrinal debate.

The *Summa* discusses the classical tripartite division of philosophy – divine philosophy, natural philosophy, and mathematics – following the schemes derived from Aristotle and elaborated by scholastic tradition. Edelheit demonstrates convincingly that Ficino was not merely familiar with this medieval discussion but fully at ease within it (p. 127). Scholastic distinctions and categories provided the conceptual scaffolding through which he approached the Aristotelian corpus. This scholastic imprint is visible across all three components of the work: metaphysics, natural philosophy, and the doctrine of the soul. Throughout these sections, Ficino employs a standard scholastic vocabulary and constructs his arguments within a framework inherited from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century debates (p. 127, 131).

By reconstructing Ficino's early engagement with scholastic method and terminology, Edelheit offers a direct response to Kristeller's thesis. Ficino's familiarity with scholastic thinking was not a residual effect of early education later abandoned in favor of Platonism. Instead, it permeated his mature reading practices and informed his independent intellectual development. In this sense, the chapter convincingly shows that Ficino's philosophical evolution cannot be understood without acknowledging the continuous presence – and creative reworking – of medieval scholastic structures within his approach to ancient and newly recovered texts.

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Chapter 5 examines the role of Thomism within Renaissance philosophical culture through Brian Garcia's study of the Dominican thinker Dominic of Flanders (1425–1479). The chapter situates Dominic within a broad revival of Thomistic studies

that flourished both in Cologne and in Italy during the fifteenth century. A movement that, as Garcia notes following Serge-Thomas Bonino, displayed several distinctive features: (1) a strong fidelity to the *litera* of Thomas Aquinas; (2) the use of the Thomistic corpus as a pedagogical framework; (3) reliance on pre-existing interpretative traditions; and (4) a tendency not to innovate but rather to reinforce and defend Thomistic arguments.

Dominic of Flanders served as *regens* of the Dominican *studium* in Florence until 1479, succeeding Antonino Pierozzi. His intellectual activity thus stands at the intersection of Dominican institutional hierarchy and the engagement with scholastic theology. Garcia's article focuses particularly on one central debate: the human intellect's capacity – or incapacity – to understand separate substances. This question hinges on a classical Thomistic claim: in our present life, human knowledge depends on *phantasmata*, and therefore the intellect cannot attain direct knowledge of immaterial entities. Dominic approaches this problem with a great command of the major scholastic positions. He systematically engages with the commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by Albert the Great, Duns Scotus, and Antonius Andreae, reconstructing their arguments with precision. His discussion shows not only familiarity with divergent medieval interpretations but also adherence to the method of scholastic disputation: outlining objections, presenting authoritative positions, and articulating a structured solution.

In the end, Dominic's stance exemplifies what Garcia characterizes as an 'hyper-Thomistic' conclusion (p. 153). In full continuity with Aquinas – drawing particularly on the *De anima* and the *Summa contra Gentiles* – Dominic reaffirms that human cognition in this life proceeds exclusively through *phantasmata*, and that separate substances cannot be intellectually apprehended by embodied beings. This alignment with Aquinas is not merely thematic but methodical: Dominic's reasoning is constructed within a strictly Thomistic conceptual framework, without attempting speculative departures or original reformulations.

Garcia's study thus highlights Dominic of Flanders as a representative figure of the Renaissance Thomistic revival: a movement which was deeply rooted in the scholastic tradition, committed to the textual integrity of Aquinas, and influential on later Dominican thought. Indeed, his positions anticipate the Thomistic orientations that would characterize sixteenth-century Dominican centers such as the School of Salamanca. Although not innovative in content, Dominic's work demonstrates the vitality, continuity, and pedagogical strength of Thomism in a period often mischaracterized as dominated solely by humanism or Platonism.

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In Chapter 6, Simone Fellina examines Jacopo Mazzoni's attempt to integrate scholastic philosophical thought with Platonism. Fellina reconstructs how Mazzoni sought to demonstrate the doctrinal compatibility between the Platonic

tradition and Christianity, drawing on arguments from Thomas Aquinas and Cajetan to support this reconciliation. Fellina first emphasizes that Florentine Platonism (with the sole exception of Cattani da Diacceto) always maintained a theoretical connection to Thomism and scholastic philosophy, thereby confirming the conclusions advanced by Edelheit in Chapter 4.

Fellina also develops an issue that is fundamental to the volume as a whole: the academic impact of Platonism, that is, the influence of Plato's thought on those masters who practiced philosophical commentary within institutional settings. Mazzoni, who taught in Pisa from 1588 and in Rome from 1597, had a strong Platonic interest, and he was officially assigned to lecture on Platonic texts on feast days – a circumstance that helps to reflects the balance between Platonic commitment and the dominant scholastic framework. Fellina highlights the methodological distance separating Ficino from Mazzoni: Mazzoni rejects Ficino's idea of a *pia philosophia*, and grants no privileged status to Plotinus or Neoplatonism; by contrast, he displays a clear adherence to Thomism (p. 157).

As Fellina shows, Mazzoni's thought reveals the osmosis of scholasticism and the new fifteenth-century bibliographical resources, even though Mazzoni remains clearly distinct from Platonism on several key issues, beginning with fundamental metaphysical principles (p. 174): with regard to the divine causal essence and the nature of ideas in the mind of God, Mazzoni aligns squarely with Thomas Aquinas. Fellina also devotes attention to Mazzoni's epistemology, showing that even here, despite Platonic influences, scholastic thought prevails. Fellina identifies three areas in which Mazzoni articulates an affinity between Platonism and Thomism (p. 159-164): the doctrine of creation as a voluntary act of God, derived from the *Timaeus*; the doctrine of creation from nothing, inspired by the *Republic*; and the conception of the temporal creation of the world.

In conclusion, Fellina demonstrates that in the final quarter of the sixteenth century a lively debate emerged in Italy concerning the possibility of reconciling Platonism with Christian theology. Whereas figures such as Francesco Vieri and Francesco Patrizi da Cherso adopted an openly apologetic stance toward Platonism, other philosophers, including Giovanni Battista Crispo, challenged any such reconciliation (p. 181). Mazzoni occupies an intermediate position, seeking instead to illustrate the usefulness and the doctrinal affinity of Platonism to Christianity, but without sharing Ficino's teleological view on Platonism.

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In Chapter 7, Matthew Gaetano examines the relationship between Platonism and Thomism at the University of Padua, focusing on a single but revealing case study: the teaching of the Dominican Girolamo Vielmi (1519–1592), who held a chair of Theology from 1554. Vielmi represents a peculiar figure within the Paduan context, for he taught theology and Sacred Scripture, he never lectured on

Aristotle's works in the philosophy curriculum, and his intellectual orientation was distinctly Platonic (p. 193). Vielmi's case exemplifies a broader tendency visible over roughly two decades: the attempt, undertaken by certain theologians, to incorporate Platonic insights into scholastic discourse.

Gaetano depicts a tension within the university between scholastic theologians reluctant to absorb Platonic doctrines (though their identity remains unclear) and professors more willing to engage with, and integrate, theoretical elements drawn from Platonism. Vielmi belongs firmly to this latter group. His intellectual formation was shaped by a significant network of early sixteenth-century Dominican theologians who paid considerable attention to Platonism – figures such as Chrysostomus Javelli, Francesco Silvestri, Nicolas de Mirabilibus, Ludovico Valenza, Gianfrancesco Beato, and Sisto Medici. Some of these thinkers taught at Padua before Vielmi; others were even his masters. Their presence suggests a wider cultural and pedagogical environment within Dominican theological teaching that was receptive to assimilating aspects of Platonic thought.

When inaugurating the academic year 1554/1555, Vielmi already employed Platonic material. According to Gaetano, Vielmi's approach reflects the doctrine of the concord between Plato and Aristotle, an approach strongly influenced by Simplicius's commentary on the *Physics* (p. 197). A distinctive feature of Vielmi's position is his recognition of a difference between medieval and Renaissance scholasticism: namely, the centrality of Greek. According to Vielmi (p. 199), Thomas Aquinas and his contemporaries either lacked access to, or did not make systematic use of, the Greek philosophical corpus, and for Vielmi this represented a genuine limitation – a constraint *ex ignorantia*. This insight alone, as Gaetano rightly notes, illuminates how a standard academic professor, rooted in traditional scholastic pedagogy, perceived himself to be operating within a transformed intellectual landscape, in which newly available Greek texts created unprecedented possibilities for philosophical understanding and speculation. Such a remark captures the methodological self-awareness of Renaissance scholasticism.

Gaetano's conclusions are particularly valuable, as they articulate with precision how sixteenth-century scholasticism interacted with the expanding availability of Platonic texts. The strategy observed in Vielmi was not an isolated phenomenon but instead characteristic of an entire phase of Renaissance scholastic culture. Figures such as Guilelmus Hamerus, Mattia Aquario, Vincent Baron, Serafino Piccinardi, and even the famously hyper-scholastic Domingo Bañez made regular use of Platonic materials and did not hesitate to recommend readings from the Platonic corpus in their lectures and writings. Through this analysis, Gaetano demonstrates that the integration of Platonism into scholastic frameworks was not a marginal curiosity but a significant and multifaceted current within the intellectual life of sixteenth-century Padua and beyond.

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In Chapter 8, Stefano Caroti examines Marcantonio Zimara's notion of prime matter, continuing a line of research he has pursued for several years. Zimara emerges as an exemplary figure for understanding the continuity between medieval scholasticism and Renaissance philosophy. This continuity is clearly illustrated by his critical engagement with Ermolao Barbaro concerning the translation of Themistius's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, an episode that highlights Zimara's competence in Greek and his extensive use of late-antique commentators. Zimara's methodological aim is to explain Aristotle in a manner that is as pure and reliable as possible, drawing directly on Greek sources and employing textual criticism rather than relying uncritically on medieval Latin intermediaries.

Within this framework, Caroti offers detailed reconstruction of the debate on prime matter: namely, whether it should be understood as pure potentiality, as maintained by Aristotle and Averroes, or whether it possesses both potentiality and a certain mode of actuality, as argued by Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and Gregory of Rimini. As Caroti notes (p. 237), Zimara inclines toward a conciliatory solution, according to which matter has an *esse* that is proper to it in an absolute sense, while remaining merely potential in relation to the specific form it receives. One of the principal merits of Caroti's contribution – thanks also to his outstanding philological expertise – lies in his careful reconstruction of Zimara's position throughout Zimara's own writings, which allows him to trace significant shifts and variations in argumentation across works such as the *Tabula cum dilucidationibus*, the *Solutiones contradictinum*, and the *Theoremata*. Particularly persuasive is Caroti's methodological conclusion, according to which the task of the historian of philosophy is « to highlight the distinctiveness of every thinker and to set them in their appropriate context. This entails resisting reductive explanations, inherited prejudices, and narrow schemes of taxonomy [...] » (p. 263).

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In Chapter 9, Michael Engel addresses Pietro Pomponazzi and the limits of theological discourse as they emerge from the lectures Pomponazzi delivered at Padua in the very early sixteenth century. Engel focuses in particular on a set of questions on the soul edited by Antonino Poppi in 1970 on the basis of a Neapolitan manuscript, while leaving aside the *reportatio* of Pomponazzi's commentary on the *De anima* preserved in the same library and dating from the same period. Engel's central aim is to show that, in these lectures, Pomponazzi did not primarily seek to transmit doctrinal contents intended to shape the students' theoretical or religious convictions. Rather, Pomponazzi aimed to provide them with a methodological training concerning what can and cannot be legitimately asserted from a logical and argumentative point of view (p. 267). The chapter develops this

interpretative perspective and shows that Pomponazzi adopts a lenient attitude toward Averroes, who is often rehabilitated. By contrast, Thomistic philosophy is frequently criticized for its clumsy attempt to reconcile Christianity and Aristotelianism – a criticism that helps to explain Pomponazzi's invectives against Hervaeus Natalis (p. 271).

In conclusion, Engel emphasizes, following Kristeller, that « the irreligion of Pomponazzi [...] is the invention of contemporary critics » (p. 277). According to Engel, Pomponazzi's objective in his early sixteenth-century university teaching was to identify doctrines that could concretely serve the defense of the immortality of the soul. This, in turn, accounts for his silence regarding Alexander of Aphrodisias and for his rehabilitation of Averroes (p. 279). From a critical standpoint, however, it would have been useful to note also the shift in Pomponazzi's perspective that occurred only a few years later. In a well-known essay entitled « Ci fu una evoluzione in senso alessandrista nel pensiero di Pomponazzi? »,[4] Antonino Poppi extensively discussed Pomponazzi's transition from an initial phase of Averroism to a closer engagement with Alexander's thought around 1505 – a problem that has also been carefully examined by Vittoria Perrone Compagni in her entry « Pomponazzi, Pietro » of the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*.[5] These studies should necessarily integrate Martin Pine's dated work, which appears nowadays forced in its interpretative orientation, despite its success (owing largely to its accessibility in English).[6]

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In Chapter 10, Trent Pomplun adopts a diachronic approach to the theological controversy surrounding the Immaculate Conception, and produces a compelling study that reconstructs the successive phases of the debate while highlighting both moments of intense polemical engagement and periods in which the issue receded into relative obscurity. Pomplun traces the origins of the controversy to Duns Scotus, but places particular emphasis on its development within the early modern Franciscan tradition, where the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception functioned as a doctrinal marker of Scotist identity in opposition to Dominican and Jesuit theology (p. 283).

Special attention is devoted to Dominican resistance to the doctrine, with figures such as Torquemada, Javelli, Spina, Báñez, and Melchor Cano. During the early modern period, Franciscans and Jesuits developed a sophisticated

[4] Antonino Poppi, *Saggi sul pensiero inedito di Pietro Pomponazzi*, Antenore, Padova 1970 (Saggi e Testi, 8), p. 27–92.

[5] Vittoria Perrone Compagni, « Pomponazzi Pietro », in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Treccani [= *DBI*], vol. LXXXIV (2015), *sub voce*.

[6] Martin Pine, *Pietro Pomponazzi: Radical Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Antenore, Padova 1986 (Saggi e Testi, 21).

hermeneutics of a range of biblical passages that appeared to analyze the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (p. 288), with rhetorical strategies playing a crucial role in uncovering the purported hidden meanings of Sacred Scripture. In the final section of the chapter, Pomplun reconstructs the historical debate over biblical arguments in favor of the Immaculate Conception, emphasizing that any scriptural passage could be interpreted through recourse to the *sensus plenior*, while the definition itself was evaluated in different ways depending on the theological perspective adopted (p. 294). Only in the eighteenth century did the doctrine acquire an authoritative status, grounded in extra-biblical considerations. Nonetheless, several Dominicans continued to argue for the enduring validity of Cajetan's criticisms, while regarding Scotist doctrine as heretical (p. 298). Significantly, even in the 1950s there were still scholars who sought to rehabilitate Aquinas's criticisms of the Immaculate Conception, thereby attesting to the longevity and resilience of this controversy.

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Like all edited volumes, this book displays elements of considerable originality alongside less innovative aspects, and some gaps. In the final part of this review, I wish to draw attention to some of these shortcomings, with a view to encouraging future research that may further develop the already well-conceived focus established by Edelheit. The first gap – and perhaps the most significant – concerns the selection of philosophers under consideration. The majority of the volume is devoted to extra-academic philosophers (such as Ficino) and to theologians (including Pierozzi, Savonarola, Rimbertini, Dominic of Flanders, and Vielmi), with the aim of demonstrating that, despite their chronological placement in the Renaissance, they possessed a solid scholastic background. This however is almost evident from the fact that they were friars or clergymen, educated under a well-established theological system (*scil.* the *Studia*). What is lacking, however, is an investigation in the opposite direction, namely, an analysis of the extent to which humanistic culture permeated the work of university professors of philosophy. Further research into the relationships among university teachers, translators, and editors of Greek classics will be essential for examining the processes of intellectual exchange between these two spheres that characterized the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I will delve into this issue in the second part of the review.

A second aspect that would merit further development concerns the geographical scope of the contributions. No essay focuses on fifteenth-century Padua; Bologna and Pavia are entirely absent, while Florence dominates the first part of the book. This geographical distribution of the essays has the unintended effect of reviving the opposition introduced by Renan between Paduan Aristotelianism and the new Platonic philosophy in Florence – an opposition that has been widely regarded as obsolete for at least seventy years. A promising

direction for future research would be for instance to clarify the relationship between the University of Padua – the stronghold of Italian Aristotelianism – and the protagonists of the Plato–Aristotle Controversy, many of whom received their education in Veneto. Moreover, the broader European context still remains unexplored: what was taking place, and how was philosophical curriculum in Spain, France, England, or the Empire? Such a perspective must necessarily be integrated, lest the prejudice of viewing the Renaissance as a purely Italian phenomenon continue to prevail.

Finally, a third area that would warrant further investigation concerns the relationships among the various educational institutions of the period: not only universities and Dominican *studia*, but also academies and, above all, the Franciscan Order. Renaissance Franciscan theology is almost entirely absent from the present volume, yet it deserves much closer attention, since the spread of print enabled it to achieve an unprecedented level of intellectual dissemination in the sixteenth century. Philosophers such as Antonio Trombetta established key hermeneutical parameters – e.g. in the field of metaphysics – that had a significant impact on professors across all faculties. Any study of the interaction between Renaissance philosophy and scholasticism can no longer afford to disregard this central pillar of early modern intellectual speculation.

II. *On Being and Essence of 'Renaissance Philosophy'*

II.1. Review of John Marenbon's Chapter 1

The first chapter of the volume, authored by John Marenbon, presents a provocative essay that compels the reader to confront a problematic categorization of the history of philosophy. Marenbon raises the fundamental question of whether it is possible to speak of a distinct 'Renaissance philosophy' apart from the medieval one, and, if so, how such a category might be meaningfully defined. In doing so, he interrogates both the chronological boundaries that would delimit this philosophical period and the essential characteristics that would justify its conceptual independence.

Marenbon's response is explicitly negative from the very opening lines of the chapter, where he declares himself a skeptic of Renaissance philosophy, stating that he does not believe there is a discrete philosophical period that can be labelled as such (p. 13). More specifically, Marenbon denies that it is possible to identify either clear chronological coordinates or distinctive features that would justify conceiving Renaissance philosophy as an autonomous entity. Throughout the chapter, Marenbon carefully emphasizes that the act of establishing periodizations is a demanding intellectual operation, insofar as it requires the identification of specific characteristics – an « essence or spirit » (p. 17) – for the period in question. Consequently, he criticizes proponents of Renaissance

philosophy for their failure to provide a precise account of either its beginning or its end (p. 19). In contrast, Marenbon advances an alternative framework, which he terms the 'Long Middle Ages' (p. 17), extending from the third century CE to the death of Leibniz, in the early eighteenth century. He argues that these fifteen centuries of philosophical history form a coherent whole on two principal grounds:

1. First, philosophy during this extended period was structured around the thought of Plato and Aristotle, whose schools functioned as « the main instrument for transmitting the ancient tradition to four sub-traditions: Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Jewish ». The emergence of the medieval tradition is located in the work of Plotinus and Porphyry, who, according to Marenbon, « ensured that Aristotle loomed as large, or larger, than Plato », and whose « work marks the beginning of the whole period ».[7]
2. Second, the coherence of the Long Middle Ages is further secured by the circulation of texts and translations across the four languages – Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew – which provided a unifying framework for philosophical activity throughout these centuries.

In the second part of the article (a genuine *pars destruens*) Marenbon identifies four common theses that seek to define the distinctive essence of the Renaissance. For each of these interpretative positions, he advances detailed critical arguments aimed at exposing their limitations. The theses under examination are as follows:

a. Renaissance philosophy can be identified by the rise of humanism and decline of scholasticism (§4.1 in his chapter);
b. The beginning of Renaissance philosophy is marked by a change in textual tradition (§4.2 in his chapter);
c. The beginning of Renaissance philosophy is marked by a shift of philosophical thinking away from the universities (§4.3 in his chapter);
d. The end of the Middle Ages and beginning of the Renaissance is marked by a break with Arabism (§4.4 in his chapter).

Marenbon's arguments compel the reader to reconsider critically many assumptions that are often taken for granted concerning the historiographical category of 'Renaissance philosophy'. The value of this chapter lies in its ability to confront us with a complex puzzle of chronologies and identities, thereby encouraging a more rigorous reflection on the very field of inquiry within which we routinely operate. It invites scholars to develop a heightened awareness of the

[7] JOHN MARENBON, « Against 'Renaissance Philosophy' », in EDELHEIT, *Renaissance Scholasticism*, p. 13–34 (= MARENBON), p. 18.

specific nature of their object of study and to articulate its defining features in a more precise manner. In the following pages, I shall seek to engage with Marenbon's arguments and to draw from them a number of constructive considerations that may contribute to the advancement of awareness on Renaissance studies.

II.2 Analysis of Arguments (*c*) and (*d*)

First, I would like to note that I find Marenbon's observations concerning points (*c*) and (*d*) particularly persuasive. In §4.3 of his chapter, Marenbon challenges the view that Renaissance philosophy can be defined on the basis of a rupture between philosophical thought and the activities traditionally carried out within the universities. This argument reminds us of a point that is far from self-evident, namely that Renaissance philosophical thought cannot be univocally identified with the extra-academic humanistic intellectual production that flourished from the fifteenth century onward. While it is undeniable that humanism played a significant role in shaping philosophical debates between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – a point to which I shall return shortly (section II.5, below) – it is equally important to recall that throughout these two centuries a continuous tradition of university masters across Europe persisted in their long-standing practice of textual commentary. Accordingly, a comprehensive and careful assessment of 'Renaissance philosophy' can no longer afford to neglect either dimension of philosophical reflection, whether conducted within or outside the universities of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In §4.4, Marenbon also criticizes the hypothesis that Renaissance thought may be defined by a progressive disengagement of the Latin world from Arabic philosophy. In this respect, he convincingly highlights the intense editorial activity that, at the end of the fifteenth century, accompanied the Latin translations and Venetian printings of the works of Avicenna and Averroes. To enumerate here all the philosophical questions – both metaphysical and natural – on which Arabic thought, in its various forms, continued to exert influence throughout the sixteenth century, would require a chapter in its own right, and in many respects such work has already been undertaken.[8]

II.3. Analysis of Argument (*a*): Humanism and Scholasticism

In §4.1, Marenbon presents the first thesis advanced by defenders of the 'Renaissance philosophy'. This thesis is articulated through two main claims: first, that there existed a strong connection between Renaissance philosophers and the

[8] See at least Dag N. Hasse, *Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2016.

humanist milieu (p. 21: « the most innovative, important and exciting philosophy began to be that done by thinkers connected in some way with humanism »); and second, that humanism exerted a concrete and profound impact on scholasticism and on the traditional ways of conceiving philosophy itself (p. 22: « humanism had so profound an influence on the whole philosophical culture at this time »).

Marenbon challenges both claims. First, he maintains that it is not possible to establish an effective comparison between the scholastic–philosophical world and the humanist milieu, insofar as these represent fundamentally different kinds of intellectual activity. As he observes,

> Historians of philosophy, it might be argued, have a responsibility to be balanced in their treatment of the different types of philosophy going on at a time, so long as they seem worthwhile to the people at the time, irrespective of their judgement, from a present-day perspective, of their relative values.[9]

Second, Marenbon seeks to downplay the impact of humanism on traditional scholastic thought. In his view, very few university professors genuinely assimilated humanist methods or interests, and – with the notable exception of Agostino Nifo (1469/1475–1529/1546) – all continued to teach in the very same manner as their medieval predecessors.[10]

Concluding this broader critique of the significance of humanism, Marenbon identifies the epistemological standard that any defense of Renaissance philosophy would have to meet: scholars in Renaissance philosophy « would have to show that humanism had a transformative effect on most of the philosophy done in the period under consideration, but they are far from being able to do so ». In fact, I shall argue that such a demonstration is possible.

From the fifteenth century onward, it is possible to document an unparallel and growing impact of the humanist milieu on the practices and standards of academic philosophy. [11] This development occurred for contingent historical reasons; nevertheless, it undeniably took place. These reasons are basically three: 1) the movement of Byzantine intellectuals; 2) the circulation of Greek manuscripts; 3) the invention of the press. Marenbon is correct in observing that scholastic medieval culture was not devoid of knowledge of Greek, and he cites figures such

[9] Marenbon, p. 21–22.

[10] Marenbon, p. 22: « Few of Nifo's contemporaries or successors as Arts Masters followed his example, however. In most of the university philosophy, whether written in Italy, Spain or north of the Alps, it is striking, rather, that the methods, intellectual assumptions and texts used remain the same ».

[11] On this point see the classic Paul O. Kristeller, « The Impact of Early Italian Humanism on Thought an Learning», in Id., *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, vol. I, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 1985 (Storia e Letteratura. Raccolta di Studi e Testi, 166), p. 65–91: 77–85.

as John Scotus Eriugena (815–877) and John of Salisbury (1120–1180).[12] Even so, a striking quantitative disparity immediately emerges. From the fifteenth century onward, the number of Greek manuscripts available, as well as the amount of texts translated into Latin, increased to an extent vastly exceeding those accessible to Eriugena or Salisbury.[13] I prove a brief example of this quantitative difference: two catalogues of the Vatican Library dating 1295 and 1311 (that is, shortly after the activity of William of Moerbeke) record approximately 30 Greek codices;[14] by contrast, Cardinal Bessarion alone, at his death in 1472, bequeathed no fewer than 482 Greek codices to the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.[15]

Beyond the increased availability of texts, what also changed was the overall approach adopted by their readers. Figures such as Eriugena or Salisbury did not systematically question the linguistic precision or the internal coherence of the Greek texts they engaged with. By contrast, the philological expertise developed by intellectuals such as Valla, Barbaro, Gaza, Del Medigo, Budé, or Melanchton, represents a methodological innovation without precedent in scholastic medieval culture, one that had important consequences in the decades that followed. It is worth recalling that, in this respect, in Lutheran Germany Valla's philological approach provided a crucial methodological foundation for the Reformation, largely through the printed editions disseminated by Ulrich von Hutten.[16]

It should not be overlooked that the institutional organization of universities and faculties of the Arts underwent a profound transformation from the late fourteenth century onward. During this period, a phenomenon of growing and ultimately irreversible significance emerged: the flourishing of Greek language

[12] Marenbon, p. 23: « The outstanding philosopher of the Carolingian era, John Scotus Eriugena, learned Greek, though admittedly not to read its classical literature or pagan philosophers ».

[13] Cf. Jill Kraye, « From Medieval to Early Modern Stoicism», in Jaqueline Hamesse, Charles Burnett, José Meirinhos (eds.), *Continuities and Disruptions between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Brepols, Louvain-la-Neuve 2009 (Textes et Etudes du Moyen Âge, 48), p. 1–24: 1: « A key aspect of disruption, on the other hand, was the recovery in the Renaissance of a large quantity of philosophical material from antiquity – mostly, though not exclusively, in Greek – which had not been available in the medieval West ».

[14] See Franz Ehrle, *Historia Bibliothecae Romanorum Pontificum*, Typis Vaticanis, Roma, 1890, t. I, p. 95–99; Augustus Pelzer, *Addenda et Emendanda ad Francisci Ehrle Historiae Bibliothecae Romanorum Pontificum*, in Bibliotheca Vaticana, Roma 1947, p. 23–24.

[15] For the index, see Lotte Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library and the Bibliotheca Marciana. Six Early Inventories*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 1979 (Sussidi Eruditi, 31). On the role of Bessarion see Michael Malone-Lee, « Cardinal Bessarion and the Introduction of Plato to the Latin West », in Giancarlo Abbamonte, Stephen Harrison (eds.), *Making and Rethinking the Renaissance. Between Greek and Latin in 15th-16th Century Europe*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2019 (Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes, 77), p. 109–124.

[16] Hajo Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation*, transl. Roland H. Bainton, Greenwood Press Publishers, Westport 1965.

studies throughout Europe (not only in Italy!).[17] This process of transformation in university teaching at the institutional level – namely, in the establishment of academic chairs and the subjects included within curricular programs – was undoubtedly connected to the intensive relations between the Latin West and the Byzantine world. Intellectual exchange between Italy and Constantinople was particularly vigorous in the late fourteenth century; it became systematic during the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1437–1445); and was dramatically intensified by the Ottoman conquest of 1453, which resulted in the migration of many of the foremost representatives of Greek culture into Western Europe.[18]

This transformation was initiated by Manuel Chrysoloras (c. 1350–1415), who in 1397 obtained the first European chair of Greek at Florence, where he also produced a Latin translation of Plato's *Republic*.[19] After studying in Byzantium, Guarino Veronese (1364–1470) succeeded Chrysoloras in 1408; he later moved to Venice in 1411 and finally settled in Ferrara in 1441.[20] Throughout his teaching career, Guarino trained entire generations of humanists, theologians, and philosophers. The young Girolamo Savonarola might have attended this school, and his grandfather Michele was close to Guarino.[21] From 1419 onward, Greek was taught in Florence by Giovanni Aurispa (1376–1459), a translator of Plutarch, who transferred to Bologna in 1425.[22] In 1429, Aurispa's Florentine chair of Greek was

[17] See, at least, the recent volume by Niccolò Zorzi, Ciro Giacomelli (eds.), *Tra Oriente e Occidente. Dotti bizantini e studenti greci nel Rinascimento Padovano*, Padova University Press, Padova 2022, who provide a concrete assessment of the presence of Greek scholars in Padua. See also Nigel G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy. Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Bloomsbury, London 1992; Jonathan Harris, *Greek Émigrés in the West, 1400–1520*, Porphyrogenitus, Camberley (UK) 1995.

[18] Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988; Deno Geanakoplos, *Constantinople and the West*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1989; Id., *Greek Scholars in Venice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mss.) 1962; Id., *Interaction of the 'Sibling' Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance (330–1600)*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1976; Federica Ciccolella, « Through the Eyes of the Greeks: Byzantine Émigrés and the Study of Greek in the Renaissance », in Abbamonte, Harrison (eds.), *Making and Rethinking the Renaissance*, p. 9–26. On the humanists and translators, see Leighton Durham Reynolds, Nigel Guy Wilson, *Copisti e filologi: La tradizione dei classici dall'antichità al Rinascimento*, Antenore, Padova 1969 (Medioevo e Umanesimo, 121), p. 135–139.

[19] Lydia Thorn-Wikkert, *Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1350–1415): Eine Biographie des byzantinischen Intellektuellen vor dem Hintergrund der hellenistischen Studien in der italienischen Renaissance*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2006 (Bonner romanistische Arbeiten, 92); Ian Thomson, « Manuel Chrysoloras and the Early Italian Renaissance », *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 7/1 (1966), p. 63–82.

[20] Gino Pistilli, « Guarini, Guarino », in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Treccani, vol. LX (2003), *sub voce*.

[21] See Mulchahey's chapter in the volume. On Michele Savonarola and his connection with Guarino Veronese, see Chiara Crisciani, Gabriella Zuccolin (eds.), *Michele Savonarola: medicina e cultura di corte*, SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2011 (Micrologus Library, 37).

[22] Emilio Bigi, « Aurispa, Giovanni », in *DBI*, vol. IV (1962), *sub voce*.

assumed by Francesco Filelfo (1398–1491), who later taught in Siena and was active in Milan during the 1450s. He translated, among other works, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.[23]

Between 1456 and 1471, the Byzantine scholar John Argyropoulos (1416–1487) held the chair of Greek in Florence, during which time he translated Aristotle.[24] He briefly returned to Florence between 1477 and 1481. In 1491, the chair of Greek passed to Janus Lascaris (1445–1534), who in 1513 moved to Rome under the patronage of Pope Leo X and founded the Greek College on the Quirinale.[25] According to Sperone Speroni, Lascaris maintained that philosophy could not be practiced without knowledge of Greek.[26] In the six years between the first and the second teaching of Argyropoulos, the Florentine chair of Greek was temporarily occupied by the Byzantine scholar Andronicus Callistus (1400 c.–1486). Callistus had previously taught Greek letters in Bologna (1458–1466) and had participated in the controversy concerning the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. In 1475, he briefly moved to Milan before traveling to Paris and London, where he was invited to teach Greek, thereby attesting to the transalpine diffusion of humanistic interests.[27]

In parallel, Constantine Lascaris (1434–1501) taught in Milan, before relocating in 1465 to Naples and later to Messina. There, he assumed the chair of Greek at the convent of San Salvatore at Faro, an institution specifically founded by Cardinal Bessarion.[28] Giorgio Valla (1447–1499), a common pupil of both Callistus and Lascaris, taught in Pavia from 1466 to 1485 and then at the Scuola di San Marco in Venice.[29] The Venetian context was no less vibrant in its cultivation of Greek studies. Giorgio Merula (1430–1494), a pupil of Francesco Filelfo, was first appointed to Mantua in 1460 and subsequently to Venice in 1465. From 1468 onward, he taught grammar at the Scuola di San Marco.[30] During the same period, the Athenian scholar Demetrius Chalcondyles (1423–1511) was active in Perugia;

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23 Paolo Viti, « Filelfo, Francesco », in *DBI*, vol. XLVII (1997), *sub voce*.

24 Emilio Bigi, « Argiropulo, Giovanni », in *DBI*, vol. IV (1962), *sub voce*.

25 Massimo Ceresa, « Lascaris, Giano », in *DBI*, vol. LXIII (2004), *sub voce*.

26 Sperone Speroni, *Dialogo delle lingue*, in *Trattatisti del cinquecento*, Ricciardi, Milano 1978, vol. I (Letteratura Italiana - Storia e testi).

27 Luigi Orlandi, *Andronikos Kallistos: A Byzantine Scholar and His Manuscripts in Italian Humanism*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2023 (Studies in manuscript cultures, 32). Further information on Florence and Paris can be found in Luca Bianchi, *Studi sull'Aristotelismo nel Rinascimento*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2003 (Subsidia Mediaevalia Patavina, 5), p. 181–183.

28 Massimo Ceresa, « Lascaris, Costantino », in *DBI*, vol. LXIII (2004), *sub voce*; Ludovico Perroni-Grande, « Per la storia del monastero del Ss. Salvatore di Messina e per la biografia di Costantino Lascaris », *Archivio di storia messinese*, 3 (1902), p. 208–211.

29 Amedeo A. Raschieri, « Valla, Giorgio », in *DBI*, vol. XCVIII (2020), *sub voce*.

30 Alessandro Daneloni, « Merlani, Giorgio », in *DBI*, vol. LXXIII (2009), *sub voce*. On the School of San Marco, see Bruno Nardi, « La scuola di Rialto e l'umanesimo veneziano », in Id., *Saggi sulla cultura veneta del Quattro e Cinquecento*, ed. Paolo Mazzantini, Antenore, Padova 1971 (Medioevo e Umanesimo, 12), p. 45–98.

then he moved to Padua, where he remained from 1463 until 1475, when he replaced Callistus in Florence.[31] Niccolò Leonico Tomeo (1456–1531) took his place in Padua, and was responsible of establishing the Greek text of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*.[32]

In 1505, the Paduan chair of Greek was assumed by Marcus Musurus (1470 c.–1515), a colleague of Pietro Pomponazzi and the teacher of an entire generation of Renaissance philosophers, including Zimara, Contarini, and Erasmus of Rotterdam.[33] Meanwhile, in Ferrara, Theodorus Gaza (1398–1475) held a teaching position and in 1448 was even elected rector of the Faculty of Arts. In 1450, he relocated to Rome to serve at the papal court, where he entered into conflict with another prominent Byzantine translator, George of Trebizond. During his stay in Ferrara, however, Gaza copied the Greek text of Plato's *Republic* and *Parmenides* for Filelfo and composed a commentary on the *Gorgias*.[34]

The landscape of established and official academic chairs within the Italian *studia* of the second half of the fifteenth century leaves little room for doubt: the community of humanists – particularly professors of Greek and translators – was institutionally integrated into university faculties and actively contributed to philosophical translating and commenting. As a result, student curricula were enriched with new competencies, foremost among them grammatical training. This process of incorporation, however, also had a significant impact on the scholarly output of these intellectuals. Methods such as linguistic comparison (Greek–Latin–Hebrew), textual criticism, and *emendatio* gradually permeated the practices of philosophical commentary in any faculty or collegium. For this reason, Marenbon's distinction between « different types of philosophy » (p. 21) might seem inadequate to describe this cultural context.

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31 Armando Petrucci, « Calcondila, Demetrio », in *DBI,* vol. XVI (1973), *sub voce*; Deno Geanakoplos, « The Discourse of Demetrius Chalcondyles on the Inauguration of Greek Studies at the University of Padua », *Studies in the Renaissance*, 21 (1974), p. 118–144.

32 Emilio Russo, « Leonico Tomeo, Niccolò », in *DBI*, vol. LXIV (2005), *sub voce*. On Tomeo see Stefano Perfetti, *Aristotle's Zoology and Its Renaissance Commentators (1521-1601)*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2000 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy – Series 1, 27), p. 65–85.

33 Paolo Pellegrini, « Musuro, Marco », in *DBI,* vol. LXXVII (2012), *sub voce*. On Musurus, see David Speranzi, *Marco Musuro. Libri e scrittura*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma 2013 (Bollettino dei classici. Supplemento, 27).

34 Concetta Bianca, « Gaza, Teodoro », in *DBI*, vol. LII (1999), *sub voce*; Perfetti, *Aristotle's Zoology*, p. 11-28; Id., « *Cultius atque integrius*. Teodoro Gaza traduttore umanistico del *De partibus animalium* », *Rinascimento*, s. 2, 35 (1995), p. 253–260. Concerning the conflict with Trebizond, see John Monfasani (ed.), *Vindicatio Aristotelis. Two Works of George Trebizond in the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the Fifteenth Century*, Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe (Ar.) 2021 (Medieval and Renaissance Text and Studies, 573); and Luca Burzelli, Riccardo Saccenti, « A Note on Two Works of George of Trebizond Edited by John Monfasani », *Mediterranea. International Journal on the Transfer of Knowledge*, 9 (2024), p. 331–348.

It must be added that this phenomenon was by no means confined to Italy and cannot be restricted to a national framework.[35] In 1411, antipope Benedict XIII (1328–1423) promulgated new constitutions for the ancient University of Salamanca with the aim of elevating it to a level comparable to Paris, Bologna, and Oxford. It is significant that two 'humanistic' chairs – one in grammar and one in languages – were incorporated into the curriculum, with compulsory instruction in grammar established as a prerequisite for access to the remaining examinations. These same constitutions were reaffirmed by Pope Eugene IV in 1446.[36]

Within this context of profound institutional reform, the Iberian Peninsula experienced a period of intense humanistic ferment, whose leading figures held teaching positions in universities and schools. The humanist bishop Alonso de Cartagena (1384–1456) managed an entourage of pupils in the Hospital del Rey in Burgos, who later became prominent humanists and professors: Alonso de Palencia (1423–1492), Diego Rodríguez Almela (1426–1489), Alonso de la Torre (1410–1460 c.).[37] Few texts capture this climate of renewed, humanistically grounded institutions more effectively than Alonso de la Torre's *Visión deleitable* (1440 c.).[38] By the early sixteenth century, nearly all universities on the Iberian Peninsula had begun to establish trilingual chairs or *Collegia*. At Salamanca, the trilingual college was officially ratified in 1550, although as early as 1511 petitions had been submitted for chairs devoted to comparative studies. The first chair of

[35] Indeed, JOHN MARENBON, « When Was Medieval Philosophy? », Inaugural Lecture, University of Cambridge 2011 (from http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/240658, last accessed 10.05.2026), p. 10, considers that the label 'Renaissance philosophers' only applies to those who were born in Italy: « Although the historians may talk about humanism, usually the distinguishing criterion is brutally geographic: Italians (and Greeks who came to Italy) belong to the Renaissance, their contemporaries elsewhere in Europe are medieval ». Against this statement see LUCA BIANCHI, « Un lungo medioevo? Note sulla periodizzazione della storia della filosofia », *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 102/3 (2023), p. 392–412: 402.

[36] LUIS ENRIQUE RODRÍGUEZ SAN PEDRO BEZARES, « Evolución del corpus legislativo en la Universidad de Salamanca (siglos XV-XVIII). Estado de la cuestión », *Estudios de Historia Social y Económica de América*, 13 (1996), p. 573–582: 575; PILAR VALERO GARCÍA, MANUEL PÉREZ MARTÍN, « Pedro de Luna y el Estudio Salmantino. Aspecto Institucional: su *Constitución* », *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna*, 8 (2009), p. 131–149: 132.

[37] On Cartagena see the recent editions of ALONSO DE CARTAGENA, *Libros de Tulio: De senetute. De los ofiçios*, ed. MARÍA MORRÁS, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Alcalá de Henares 1996; MARÍA MORRÁS, JEREMY LAWRANCE (eds.), *Alfonso de Cartagena's* Memoriale virtutum *(1422). Aristotle for Lay Princes in Medieval Spain*, Brill, Leiden 2022 (The Iberian Religious World, 8); LUIS FERNÁNDEZ GALLARDO, *Alonso de Cartagena. Una biografía política en la Castilla del siglo XV*, Junta de Castilla y León, León 2002.

[38] Concerning de la Torre see at least LUIS GIRÓN-NEGRÓN, *Alfonso de la Torre's* Visión Deleytable. *Philosophical Rationalism and the Religious Imagination in 15th Century Spain*, Brill, Leiden 2001 (Medieval Iberian Peninsula, 14).

Greek was assigned in 1495 to the Portuguese scholar Arias Barbosa.[39] The University of Alcalá de Henares founded a *collegium trilingue* in 1528 by mandate of its rector, the theologian Mateu Pascual Catalán.[40] As will be discussed in greater detail below, this cultural environment – characterized by the interaction of scholasticism, humanism, and institutional academic planning – is essential for understanding the emergence of new philosophical traditions, such as the School of Salamanca, from the 1530s onward.

Within the Holy Roman Empire, the interaction between humanism and scholasticism can be observed from the mid-fifteenth century onward, although the formal institutionalization of chairs of Greek occurred considerably later. In the 1450s, the theologian and astronomer Georg von Peuerbach (1423–1461), professor at Vienna, translated Ptolemy's *Almagest* together with his renowned pupil Johannes Regiomontanus (1436–1476).[41] At the University of Basel, Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) taught Latin from 1477 onward and, as far as can be ascertained, commented on Aristotle using the Greek text. Reuchlin studied also in Italy under Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.[42] Thanks to his initiative, the first chair of Greek in Germany was established at Leipzig and was awarded to Petrus Mosellanus (1493–1524).[43] Among Reuchlin's most distinguished pupils was Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560), to whom he was also closely related. Regarded as the finest Greek scholar in the Empire after Erasmus, Melanchthon was

[39] Ana M. Carabias Torres, « Evolución histórica del Colegio Trilingüe de Salamanca: 1550-1882 », *Studia historica. Historia moderna*, 1 (1983), p. 143–168. Concerning Barbosa, see José López Rueda, *Helenistas Españoles del Siglo XVI,* Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid 1973 (Manuales y anejos de 'Emerita', 27), p. 53–59; Luis Gil Fernández, *Panorama social del Humanismo español (1500-1800),* Tecnos, Madrid 1997 (Estudios, 17), p. 49, 240–241, 532, 543.

[40] Antonio Alvar Ezquerra, « El Colegio de San Jerónimo o Colegio trilingüe », in Antonio Alvar Ezquerra, Santiago Aguadé Nieto (eds.), *Historia de la Universidad de Alcalá*, Editorial Universidad de Alcalá, Alcala de Henares 2010, p. 215–222; Id., « El Colegio Trilingüe de la Universidad de Alcalá de Henares (Notas para su estudio) », in María Consuelo Alvarez Morán, Rosa María Iglesias (eds.), *Contemporaneidad de los Clásicos en el umbral del Tercer Milenio*. Actas del Congreso Internacional (La Habana, 1–5 diciembre de 1998), EDITUM, Murcia 1999, p. 515–523.

[41] Friedrich Samhaber, *Die Zeitzither: Georg von Peuerbach und das helle Mittelalter*, Raab, Wambacher 2000; Irmela Bues, « Johannes Regiomontanus (1436–1476) », *Fränkische Lebensbilder*, 11 (1984), p. 28–43; Rudolf Mett, *Regiomontanus. Wegbereiter des neuen Weltbildes*, Teubner – Vieweg, Stuttgart – Leipzig 1996 (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 48).

[42] On humanism in Germany, see the fundamental Jan-Hendryk de Boer, *Die Gelehrtenwelt ordnen: zur Genese des hegemonialen Humanismus um 1500*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2017. See also Werner Beierwaltes, « Reuchlin und Pico della Mirandola », *Tijdschrift voor filosofie*, 56 (1994), p. 313–337; see also Joseph Dan, « The Kabbalah of Johannes Reuchlin and Its Historical Significance », in Id. (ed.), *The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books and Their Christian Interpreters*, Harvard College Library, Cambridge (Mass.) 1997, p. 55–95.

[43] Robert Schober, *Petrus Mosellanus, 1493–1524, ein vergessener Mosel-Humanist*, Görres-Verlag, Koblenz 1979.

appointed in 1518 to the newly established chair of Greek at Wittenberg.[44] The events associated with the Lutheran Reformation are sufficiently well known that they need not be rehearsed here. It should nevertheless be recalled that this philological approach to texts – whether Greek or biblical – played a crucial role in bringing Luther and Melanchthon together in matters of textual hermeneutics.[45]

With regard to France, in 1452 Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville (1403–1483) reformed the statutes of the University of Paris.[46] Within the Faculty of Arts, the study and practice of grammar were formally introduced and strongly encouraged.[47] Five years later, an alumnus of Manuel Chrysoloras, Gregorio Tifernate (1414–1462) – known as the first Latin translator of the Pseudo-Timaeus of Locri[48] – was appointed. He thus became the first professor of Greek in Paris. Castellani's tenure, however, was relatively brief, and in 1474 he was replaced by two new figures: Andronicus Callistus, who later departed for London, and Hermonymus of Sparta (1435–1503). Emerging from the circle of Gemistos Plethon at Mistra, Hermonymus traveled to Italy, where he resided in both Rome and Milan. From the 1470s onward, he was active in Paris, where he obtained the chair of Greek at the Sorbonne.[49] Among his pupils were such prominent figures as Guillaume Budé (1467–1540), Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455–1536), Johannes Reuchlin, and Beatus Rhenanus (1485–1547). In effect, a substantial portion of the leading European humanists of the sixteenth century passed through Hermonymus's lectures in Paris.

The list of academic institutions that established chairs in Greek grammar or linguistic comparison could be extended for many pages, far beyond the scope of

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[44] On Melanchthon see at least Günter Frank (ed.), *Philipp Melanchthon: Der Reformator zwischen Glauben und Wissen. Ein Handbuch*, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2017; Ernst Wolf, *Philipp Melanchthon: Evangelischer Humanismus*. Rede bei der Immatrikulationsfeier der Georgia Augusta am 12. November 1960, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen – Zürich 1961 (Göttinger Universitätsreden, 30).

[45] Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, The Beacon Press, Boston 1952, p. 69. On the connection between Reformation and Renaissance, see Monfasani, « The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages », p. 179.

[46] Anna Esposito, « Estouteville, Guillaume d' », in *DBI*, vol. XLIII (1993), *sub voce*; Jacques Verger, *La réforme du cardinal d'Estouteville (1452): l'université de Paris entre Moyen Âge et modernité*, in *Les Universités en Europe (1450-1814)*, Bulletin de l'Association des Historiens modernistes des Universités française, Paris 2013, p. 55–76.

[47] Ricardo García-Villoslada, *La Universidad de Paris durante los estudios de Francisco de Vitoria (1507-1522)*, Apud aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, Roma 1938, p. 322–323.

[48] Giacomo Mancini, « Gregorio Tifernate », *Archivio storico italiano*, 81 (1923), p. 65–112; John Butcher, Andrea Czortek, Matteo Martelli (eds.), *Gregorio e Lilio. Due Tifernati protagonisti dell'Umanesimo italiano*, University Book, Umbertide 2017 (Quaderni. Biblioteca del Centro studi 'Mario Pancrazi', 13).

[49] Maria P. Kalatzi, *Hermonymos: A Study in Scribal, Literary and Teaching Activities in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries*, Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, Athens 2009.

the present article. This abundance of names (encompassing intellectuals, cities, and translated works) serves to demonstrate that, beginning in the fifteenth century, a genuinely new phenomenon emerged within the Western faculties. The university system, structured around chairs and *curricula*, opened itself to the incorporation of new academic figures: namely, the professors of Greek grammar, who most of the times were also translators of classical texts. Through these newly institutionalized roles, philosophical debate was enriched by the availability of previously marginal or inaccessible classical sources – Plato, Theophrastus, Diogenes Laertius, Simplicius, Plutarch, among others – supported by an unprecedented circulation of Greek manuscript codices. This observation does not entail denying that the scholastic Middle Ages possessed grammatical instruction, incorporated it within the curriculum of the liberal arts, or showed interest in Greek learning. But we might agree on the fact that the commitment of medieval masters or friars (like Burgundio of Pisa, James of Venice, Bartholomew of Sicily, or William of Moerbeke)[50] to the recovery of manuscripts, their translation, and the discussion of textual problems, can hardly be compared with the scale and intensity of these activities as they developed in the fifteenth century.

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The establishment of new chairs of Greek, which gradually spread throughout Europe, indicates that the university context was beginning to incorporate into its institutional framework the textual and methodological innovations that the humanist milieu had been disseminating since the early fifteenth century. We have already observed the circulation of Greek scholars across national boundaries; the complementary perspective concerns the extent to which local professors absorbed and benefited from these new approaches in their daily practice of commentary.

Philosophy professors teaching at Padua from the mid-fifteenth century provide the most significant example of this osmosis between humanism and university philosophy – one could call it 'scholasticism', if preferred. Nicoletto Vernia (1442–1499), who taught natural philosophy at Padua for nearly thirty years, undertook a groundbreaking initiative: namely, one of the very first printed editions of the Latin-translated Aristotelian corpus in six volumes (Venice, by Andrea Torresani, 1482). Vernia exemplifies the emerging figure of the fifteenth-century philosophy professor: no longer merely a commentator, but also a commentator-philologist concerned with the textual correctness of Aristotelian arguments. Although he did not know Greek personally, he was able, through

[50] Regarding the Greek manuscripts available to these translators, see REYNOLDS, WILSON, *Copisti e filologi*, p. 104–106.

collaboration with two Hellenists – Agostino dal Bene and Girolamo Bagolino (d. 1552) – to access Greek manuscripts with which he emended Aristotle's texts.[51]

Vernia himself provides evidence of how a traditional scholastic commentator could now engage with problems of textual criticism. In the preface to his edition of Burley's *Expositio in Physicam*, he informs the dedicatee, Sebastiano Badoer (1427–1498), that he had to employ emendation practices in order to establish the correct text of the commentary.[52] On the same occasion, Vernia expressed his admiration for Ermolao Barbaro (1454–1493), who had recently translated from Greek into Latin Themistius's commentary on the *Physica*.[53] These passages suggest that Vernia understood the practice of textual editing and textual criticism as a novel tool – derived from his engagement with the humanist milieu – and one that served his professional activity as a teacher. Unlike many university masters of the preceding two centuries, Vernia recognized the problems of textual reliability inherent in the works to be commented, and acknowledged the necessity of reconstructing the text through the comparison of manuscripts, whether Latin or Greek. Moreover, he demonstrated a clear awareness of the hermeneutic potential of the Greek commentators newly translated into Latin during the fifteenth century. The spread of movable-type printing from the mid-1460s onward functioned as a powerful amplifier of this new methodology, promoting its dissemination among both humanists and university professors. It is noteworthy that the humanist milieu itself applauded Vernia's philological commitment. In a famous letter of October 1483, Ermolao Barbaro praised Vernia for his efforts to restore the textual and lexical accuracy of Aristotelian works in their Latin translation.[54]

Vernia was by no means the only professor to combine the traditional practice of scholastic commentary with the production of philologically accurate editions. On a closer look, the intellectual landscape of the University of Padua in the final three decades of the fifteenth century offers numerous comparable examples. The

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[51] Marco Forlivesi, « Vernia Nicoletto », in *DBI,* vol. XCVIII (2020), *sub voce*; Edward Mahoney, *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance: Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2000 (Variorum Collected Studies Series, 697).

[52] Nicoletus Vernia, *Praefatio*, in Gualtherus Burlaeus, *Expositio in Aristotelis Physicam*, Johannes Herbort, de Seligenstadt, Venetiis 15 Apr. 1482, fol. A2ra: « Superioribus diebus ab impressoribus quibusdam rogatus ut Burleum super libris de phisico auditu emendarem, qui antea impressus corruptissimus erat. Quem cum essem hoc anno lecturus ob scolasticorum utilitatem, laborem hunc libenter suscepi ».

[53] Nicoletus Vernia, *Praefatio*, fol. A2ra: « Volentes ergo ipsam philosophiam diuidere per eius diffinitionem tangamus quam Themistius in prohemio libri de phisico auditu ponit. Dicit: [...]. Et hoc est quod Themistius inquit in eodem prohemio de phisico auditu quem nuper transtulit de greco in latinum in omni disciplinarum genere eruditissimus Hermolaus Barbarus, qui et si nomine Barbarus sit, re tamen non barbarus ».

[54] Ermolao Barbaro to Nicoletto Vernia (in Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae, orationes et carmina*, ed. Vittore Branca, 2 vols., Bibliopolis, Firenze 1943, epistola 31).

most renowned among them is Elijah del Medigo (1458–1493), who, despite not holding a formal teaching position at Padua, was appointed by the Venetian government as an 'arbiter' of philosophical disputes at the university – probably also as lecturer.[55] Del Medigo pursued philosophical activity along three interconnected lines: first, as an exegete of contemporary philosophical problems, as evidenced by his well-known *Quaestiones De efficientia mundi*, *De primo motore*, and *De esse et essentia et uno*; second, as a translator of Aristotelian and Averroist works, including Hebrew–Latin versions of the epitome on the *Meteorologica*, of Kalonymos's commentary on the *Meteorologica*, Averroes's paraphrase of *De partibus animalium*, and the prologue to *Metaphysica* XII; and third, as an editor of scholastic texts, most notably the *Quaestiones super Physicam* of Jean de Jandun (1280–1328).[56]

A direct pupil of Vernia, Antonio Fracanziani (1450–1506), published the first printed edition of Avicenna's *Metaphysica*, a text that he had personally emended (*castigata*) together with the friar Francesco da Macerata.[57] It remains unclear on what basis the Latin text was corrected, and it is not known whether Fracanziani possessed any knowledge of Arabic. Nevertheless, even Fracanziani – despite being a traditional university professor – felt compelled to emphasize that he was offering a text purified according to the most recent philological criteria.[58]

A further testimony to this Paduan context is mentioned by Pietro Pomponazzi, who, in his unpublished commentary on *Metaphysica* XII, refers to one of his former teachers at Padua:

> I am like a certain doctor in the ancient Studium of Padua who, whenever he failed to understand a passage, immediately declared it corrupt; to such an extent that, once he had grown old, he understood nothing at all, because he considered all his books corrupt.[59]

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[55] On Elijah see Michael Engel, *Elijah Del Medigo and Paduan Aristotelianism: Investigating the Human Intellect*, Bloomsbury, New York 2016 (Bloomsbury Studies in the Aristotelian Tradition); and Giovanni Licata, *Secundum Avenroem: Pico della Mirandola, Elia del Medigo e la 'seconda rivelazione' di Averroè*, Officina di studi medievali, Palermo 2022.

[56] Concerning these editions, see Antonino Poppi, *Causalità e infinità nella scuola padovana dal 1480 al 1513*, Antenore, Padova 1966, p. 135-150.

[57] Maria Muccillo, « Fracanziani, Antonio », in *DBI*, vol. XLIX (1997), *sub voce*.

[58] Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, « Survivance et renaissance d'Avicenne à Venise et à Padoue », in Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente fra tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento*, Sansoni, Venezia 1966, p. 75–102: 88–90.

[59] Petrus Pomponatius, *Expositio super XII Metaphysicae*, t.c. 14: « Sum autem similis cuidam doctori antiquo patavino qui, quando non intelligebat locum aliquem, statim ipsum dicebat corruptum, in tantum quod, effectus senex, nil iam intelligebat, quum haberet omnes suos libros corruptos ». I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Vittoria Perrone Compagni, who is preparing the edition of this *Expositio*, for sharing the text with me before its publication.

It is impossible to determine with certainty whom Pomponazzi had in mind – nor can it be excluded that he was referring to Vernia, given the reference to an 'aged master'. Notwithstanding its ironic tone, the passage bears witness to the fact that traditional commentary practices were by then being hybridized with forms of textual criticism that increasingly supplemented – or at least accompanied – conceptual exegesis. Philosophical practices in Padua were now, for the first time, established on a strong philological basis.

In his chapter, Marenbon refers to Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), presenting him as an example of the standard prototype of the university professor exclusively concerned with commenting on the Aristotelian tradition in a scholastic manner (p. 22). However, even Pomponazzi is affected by the encounter between academic philosophy and the humanistic milieu in the generation of teachers who preceded him. Marenbon mentions only the *Tractatus de immortalitate animae* (1516). Yet, if one turns to Pomponazzi's university classes, a different picture emerges. Pomponazzi repeatedly emends the *lectiones* of the texts of *Aristoteles* and *Averroes Latinus*, proposing alternative textual readings intended to clarify their meaning. The *reportationes* of his courses are replete with textual comparisons, in which the professor contrasts 'his text' (*mea littera*) with other translations (*alia littera*). Aquinas also, in his commentaries on Aristotle, occasionally engaged in the comparison of different *litterae*, albeit with considerably less frequency. The crucial point, however, is that, unlike Aquinas, Pomponazzi directly addresses the translators' exegetical choices and does not refrain from criticizing the semantic adequacy of the Greek–Latin renderings.[60]

It is well known that, during his time in Bologna, Pomponazzi engaged in discussions on numerous problematic points of the Greek text with his colleague and friend, the Hellenist Lazzaro Bonamico (1479–1552).[61] In a passage of the *Expositio super Metaphysicam*, Pomponazzi compares the Latin translations with the Greek original:

[60] See for instance Petrus Pomponatius, *Quaestio de remanentia elementorum in mixto*, in Luca Burzelli, *Pietro Pomponazzi and the Renaissance Theory of the Elements*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2024, p. 268: « Et nota quod error stat in una littera haec et Theodorus habet ly *haec* et transtulit *ex*, sed ly *haec* abundat. Unde textus vult dicere quod prima compositio est vocatorum elementorum, scilicet ignis, aeris, aquae et terrae ». Concerning this general approach by Pomponazzi, see Leonardo Graciotti, « Pomponazzi Filologo Aristotelico », *Aristotelica*, 1 (2022), p. 87–100.

[61] Petrus Pomponatius, *Super I De partibus animalium*, in Milano, Venerabile Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ms. D. 417 inf., f. 3r: « Quia multi sunt viri greci a quibus quottidie adisco (D. Lazarus noster, Iohannes Hispanus, Petrus Iacobus Neapolitanus et alii), ego rogo eos ut me corrigant ubi male dixero, ut vobiscum adiscam; nam magis amo scientiam quam me ».

> Indeed, the text must stand as it is found, for I have consulted excellent Hellenists. They stated that the phrase stands in the manner in which it stands in our [translation]. The translator intended that the '*si*' be understood as a '*quoniam*'; for this reason, his wording reads '*quoniam*'.[62]

Such a passage – and it is not an isolated case – reveals the depth to which the methodologies and interests of the humanistic world had penetrated academic debate and the practices of scholastic commentary. Undoubtedly, Pomponazzi did not know Greek and did not regard himself as a refined translator of classical texts. Nonetheless, like his master Vernia, Pomponazzi had come to understand that the practice of Aristotelian exegesis could no longer proceed without recourse to textual criticism.

Between 1521 and 1523, two different pupils of Pomponazzi – Pietro Alcionio (1487–1527) and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490–1573), both humanists – produced and published two competing Latin translations of the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*.[63] Alcionio claimed to have collated the Aldine edition against Bessarion's manuscript codices and thus to have relied on a purer and more reliable Greek text.[64] Both translations were explicitly addressed to an academic readership: in the preface to his work, Sepúlveda even mentions Pomponazzi and his lectures on the *Meteorologica* (1523) as the natural audience for this new and more authoritative Latin translation.[65]

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[62] Petrus Pomponatius, *Expositio super XII Metaphysicae*, t.c. 6: « Re vera textus debet stare ut iacet, quia consului optimos Graecos; dixerunt quod littera stat hoc modo ut in nostra habetur: translator voluit ut ly *si* intelligatur pro *quoniam*; ideo sua littera dicit *quoniam* ».

[63] Mario Rosa, « Alcionio, Pietro », in *DBI,* vol. II (1960), *sub voce*; Julian Solana Pujalte, « Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda: un umanista spagnolo difensore di Alberto Pio contro Erasmo », in Maria Antonietta Marogna (ed.), *Alberto Pio da Carpi contro Erasmo di Rotterdam nell'età della Riforma*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa 2005, p. 11–26: 14–15. An overall discussion of the secondary literature on Sepúlveda can be found in Julian Solana Pujalte, « Estudios filológicos sobre la obra de Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1984–2003) », in Fabio Forner, Carla M. Monti, Paul G. Schmidt (eds.), *Margarita amicorum. Studi di cultura europea per Agostino Sottili*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2005, p. 1051–1072. Concerning the editions of *De mundo*, see Luca Burzelli, « Discussing the authorship of *De mundo*. Humanistic debates in Bologna between 1521 and 1523 », *Medioevo*, 51 (2026), forthcoming.

[64] Pietro Alcionio to Federico II Gonzaga, in Aristotelis *Libri De generatione et Interritu duos, Meteoron* [...], *De mundo* [...], Bernardinus de Vitalibus, Venetiis 1521, fol. Qiiiv: « [...] codices tum formulis expressi, tum manu scripti, quos multos vel ex ipsa Graecia nuper allatos habuimus, ita multis mendis confusi atque inversi circumferebantur, ut ad rectam veramque perstruendam lectionem nullum laborem nullamque diligentiam sufficere experti fuissemus, nisi Andreas Naugerius quosdam certissimae fidei summaeque vetustatis mihi ex Bessarionea Bybliotheca prompsisset ». Bessarion's codices of *De mundo* are now stored in Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, mss. gr.200, fol. 303–308; gr.215, fol. 157–167; gr.216, fol. 59–77; gr.265, fol. 201–215; gr.308, fol. 35–46; gr.379, fol. 343–349 (see Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library*).

[65] Johannis Ginés Sepulvedae *Praefatio ad Herculem Gonzagam*, in Aristotelis *Liber de mundo...*, per Hieronymum de Benedictis, Bononiae 1523, fol. Aiv: « [...] quem librum, si paulo intensiore cura legere tanti putabis, magno is (mihi crede) tibi erit adiumento ad studia meteorologica quae, licet

This renewed awareness of the importance of the textual dimension in exegetical practice becomes evident also when one considers the names of humanists that appear in Pomponazzi's lectures. Upon taking up his teaching post in Bologna, Pomponazzi became, in certain respects, deeply preoccupied with the comparison of translations and with the assessment of their hermeneutical consistency. In these *reportationes*, figures such as John Argyropoulos, Marsilio Ficino, Bessarion, and Theodorus Gaza are regularly mentioned, each in connection with specific problems concerning the translation of the Greek text. The impact of Gaza's translation, together with the broader humanistic concerns of textual criticism, on Pomponazzi's *Expositio super De partibus animalium* cannot not be overstated. In *lectio* 2 of Book II, Pomponazzi goes so far as to sketch the history of the transmission of the Aristotelian corpus:

> Gentlemen, I have two interpretations: the ancient one and this one by Theodorus [Gaza]. The ancient one says nothing. As for that of Theodorus, I tell you that I believe the Latins are not the only ones to possess corrupt texts, but that the Greeks do as well. Because nearly two thousand years have passed since Aristotle lived, and there were many wars, and Aristotle's books were hidden and sold, and so on. In my view, in this passage Aristotle's opinion is as follows...[66]

References of this kind to Gaza's translation recur throughout the *Expositio*, in which no fewer than twenty mentions of the *littera Theodori* can be identified. These examples show that, although Pomponazzi was concerned exclusively with explicating the contents of the Aristotelian text – much like a medieval scholastic master – the manner and methods by which this exegesis was conducted had nonetheless undergone a substantial transformation. New strategies of commentary were now being incorporated into traditional ones. This clear concern for the reliability of the Greek text and of the various Latin translations is a direct outcome of the fifteenth-century encounter between humanism and scholasticism, and it left an indelible mark on the practice of philosophical commentary.

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nunc in Bononiensi gimnasio cui tu es praecipuo maximoque ornamento, doctore Petro Pomponatio celeberrimo philosopho aemuleris, adiutus acri ingenio (nec mediocri eruditione Iohannis Francisci Furnii omnium horarum iuvenis et ad summam doctrinam spectati) ipsa tamen huius libri lectio per se tibi non mediocriter ad eadem opitulabitur ».

[66] Petrus Pomponatius, *Expositio I et II De partibus animalium*, ed. Stefano Perfetti, Olschki, Firenze 2004, p. 138, l. 144–150: « Domini, ego habeo duas interpretationes: antiquam et istam Theodori. Antiqua nihil dicit. De ista Theodori dico vobis quod credo quod non tantum Latini habeant textus depravatos, sed etiam Graeci. Nam sicut circiter duo milia anni ex quo fuit Aristoteles et interim fuerunt multa bella et libri Aristotelis fuerunt absconditi et mercefacti, ideo etc. Sed, quantum mihi videtur, in ista parte sententia Aristotelis est ista... ».

The new 'philological' approach to the standard texts of academic commentary did not concern university professors alone, but also extended to the *Studia* of friars. The case of the Dominican Francesco Silvestri (1474–1528) is, I believe, emblematic. Although best known for his commentary on the *Summa contra gentiles*, Silvestri was also a commentator on the *Analytica posteriora*.[67] In a recent study, Pietro Rossi has shown that Silvestri did not confine himself to commenting on the Latin text, but instead interpolated the Latin translation of the *Analytica* on the basis of Greek variants identified in Aristotle's citations in Philoponus. The prefatory letter to the *Annotationes in libros Posteriorum*, dedicated to Ippolito d'Este, alternates between Latin and Greek passages, the latter drawn from the *Suda* lexicon, Philoponus, or Themistius.[68] Such a philologic and bilingual approach is by no means usual for a master of the thirteenth century; yet, this is the peculiar didactic approach of a professor of philosophy in the fifteenth to the sixteenth century.

This situation appears to confirm the same institutional configuration I have outlined for Pomponazzi. In comparison with scholastic commentary practices, the doctrinal content of these lectures or works remains unchanged; what changes is the method of inquiry. From the fifteenth century onward, intellectuals and teachers in the *studia* and universities had access to Greek manuscripts, instructors in Greek, and a learned audience interested in reconstructing the authentic form of classical texts. This is what Renaissance philosophy professors used to do, and this is the new approach through which they analyzed classical authorities. By contrast, how many fourteenth-century masters did – or even, could – emend the Latin translation of Aristotle on the basis of Greek variants drawn from a late-antique commentator?

This is the crucial point: Renaissance professors of philosophy carried out their didactic task with a strong philological commitment, working on Latin and Greek texts together. Throughout his teaching career at Padua, Marcantonio Passeri (aka. *Genua*, 1491–1563) sought to reconcile the Aristotelian commentary tradition with the newly available late-antique commentaries translated into Latin at the end of the fifteenth century.[69] Alessandro Piccolomini (1508–1578), professor of philosophy at Padua, produced Latin translations of Aristotle's *Rhetorica* and

[67] Giorgio Caravale, « Silvestri, Francesco », in *DBI*, vol. XCII (2018), *sub voce*. On the impact of Humanism on logic, see Kristeller, « The Impact of Early Italian Humanism », p. 83–84.

[68] Pietro B. Rossi, « Javelli's *Compendium logicae* and the Dominican Exegesis of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* in the Renaissance », in Tommaso de Robertis, Luca Burzelli (eds.), *Chrysostomus Javelli. Pagan Philosophy and Christian Thought in the Renaissance*, Springer, Cham 2023 (International Archives of the History of Ideas / Archives internationales d'histoire des idées, 243), p. 53–82: 66–68, and 74–79; Id., « La tradizione esegetica greca nelle *Annotationes in Posteriora* del domenicano Francesco Silvestri (d. 1528) », *Studia Graeco-arabica*, 14 (2024), p. 1063–1074.

[69] Alba Paladini, *La scienza animastica di Marco Antonio Genua*, Congedo, Galatina 2006 (Dipartimento di Filologia Classica e di Scienze Filosofiche. 'Testi e Saggi', 38).

Mechanica, as well as of Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on the *Meteorologica*.[70] He was also committed to a systematic vulgarization of Aristotelian philosophy.[71] Vincenzo Maggi (1498–1564), who succeeded Genua at Padua in 1533, translated and commented on Aristotle's *Poetica*.[72] Simone Porzio, professor of philosophy at Naples and Pisa, translated the treatise *De coloribus*.[73]

A final reference must be made to the School of Salamanca and to the development of the academic tradition commonly known as *Second Scholasticism*. According to Marenbon,

> A lack of interest for humanism, with regard both to the manner of their philosophizing and the positions and arguments they propose, is even more obvious in the succession of highly sophisticated, innovatory philosopher-theologians who worked in the Spanish universities from the time of Victoria [***sic!***] (d. 1546) through Suárez (d. 1617) to the end of the seventeenth century.[74]

In fact, it has long been known that the philosophical tradition to which Marenbon refers originated and developed in Salamanca through the direct engagement of medieval scholasticism with Iberian humanism. First, several celebrated Salamancan professors in different areas were also distinguished humanists and, in some cases, accomplished Hellenist:[75] for instance, the father of Castilian grammar, Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1444–1522), taught Greek at Salamanca and Alcalà for forty years.[76] As María Morrás clearly showed, from 1417 onwards, academics in Salamanca were commenting on Aristotle's *Ethica* only using Bruni's humanistic translation.[77]

Second, figures such as Francisco de Vitoria (1483–1546) and Domingo de Soto (1494–1560) not only benefited from an educational and cultural environment permeated by humanism, but also actively sought to absorb materials, sources, and problems from that tradition. As Santiago Orrego Sánchez has noted, the first generation of masters of the School of Salamanca appropriated several

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70 Franco Tomasi, « Piccolomini, Alessandro », in *DBI*, vol. LXXXIII (2015), *sub voce*.

71 On this point see Luca Bianchi, « Volgarizzare Aristotele: per chi? », *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 59 (2012), p. 480–495.

72 Elisabetta Selmi, « Maggi, Vincenzo », in *DBI,* vol. LXVII (2006), *sub voce*.

73 Vincenzo Lavenia, « Porzio, Simone », in *DBI,* vol. LXXXV (2016), *sub voce*; Eva Del Soldato, *Simone Porzio: un aristotelico tra natura e grazia*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2010 (Centuria, 6).

74 Marenbon, p. 23.

75 See, for instance, Paula Oliveira e Silva, « Francisco de Vitoria », in Ángel Poncela González (ed.), *La Escuela de Salamanca. Filosofía y Humanismo ante el mundo moderno*, Editorial Verbum, Madrid 2015, p. 131–162: 136

76 Pedro Martín Baños, *La pasión de saber. Vida de Antonio de Nebrija*, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Huelva, Huelva 2019.

77 María Morrás, « Las sendas del aristotelismo en el Cuatrocientos hispánico. Una aproximación contextual », *Cahiers d'études hispaniques médiévales*, 41/1 (2018), p. 215–240.

authoritative sources from the humanist milieu, foremost among them the work of Tommaso de Vio (aka. Cajetan; 1469–1534).[78] The impact of Cajetan is immediately evident to anyone who opens any page of Vitoria's commentary on Aquina's *Prima pars*.

Moreover, this 'humanist' tendency within the early Salamanca School goes beyond Cajetan. Vitoria drew extensively on leading humanists of his own time, or of the immediately preceding generation, in developing his theological analyses. He studied in Paris together with Domingo de Soto from 1508 to 1522, precisely at the height of humanist ferment associated with figures such as Guillaume Budé and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. As Garcìa-Villoslada showed almost a century ago, the university of Paris at the beginning of the sixteenth century was not only house to nominalist scholastics (like John Mair), but also a vivid humanist environment. When Vitoria arrived in France, François Tissard d'Ambroise (1460 c.–1508) was still active in the Collège de Coqueret, and Girolamo Aleandro (1480–1542) was working in the Collège La Marche.[79] Vitoria was deeply influenced also by Budé, whom he frequently mentioned in his lectures: Vitoria's discussion of the meaning of the terms *entelecheia* and *endelechia* in the commentary on the *Prima pars*, q. 75, art. 1, amounts to little more than a paraphrase of Budé's *De asse*.[80]

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[78] Santiago Orrego Sánchez, *La actualidad del ser en la primera escuela de Salamanca*, PhD tesis, Universidad de Navarra 2003, p. 10: « Puede admirarse en Vitoria, Soto y Cano su apertura a las influencias de otras escuelas teológicas y al movimiento humanista, que se mitiga notablemente en sus sucesores de la segunda mitad del siglo »; Id., « The 16th Century School of Salamanca as a Context of Synthesis between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Theological and Philosophical Matters », in Hamesse, Burnett, Meirinhos (eds.), *Continuities and Disruptions*, p. 113–137: 114: « It is also customarily said that one of the most relevant features of the School of Salamanca was the integration of the new ideals and methods of Renaissance Humanism with those of the medieval Scholastic tradition ». See also Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, « Orientación humanística de la teología vitoriana », *Ciencia Tomista*, 72 (1947), p. 7–27; Ricardo García-Villoslada, « Erasmo y Vitoria », *Razón y Fe*, 107 (1935), p. 19–38, p. 340–350, p. 506–519.

[79] Juan Belda Plans, *El maestro Francisco de Vitoria, OP (c. 1483–1546), Fundador de la Escuela de Salamanca*, Madrid, Fundación Ignacio Larramendi, 2014, p. 13. Concerning Vitoria's connection with humanists in Paris, see Orrego Sanches, « The 16th Century School of Salamanca », p. 116: « There is evidence of Vitoria's sympathy with humanist attempts to reform theology. While he was studying in Paris, Vitoria openly defended Erasmus in front of certain commissions of theologians. The greatest Spanish humanist and friend of Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives, wrote a letter to Erasmus telling him that he had an admirer and defender in the person of Vitoria, and Erasmus himself sent a letter to Vitoria, asking him for his support in Spain ».

[80] Franciscus de Vitoria, *Super Primam partem*, q. 75, art. 1 (Madrid, Biblioteca de la Universidad Complutense, ms. 231, fol. 717v): « Et quia ibi Aristoteles ponit diffinitionem anime, et Sanctus Thomas hic dicit quod est primus actus corporis, oportet explicare diffinitionem anime, et prima particula est actus. Et Cicero, 1 *Tusculanarum*, quum dicit quod anima sive prima vita est endelechia, id est continua motio, vel quod est idem quod energia, id est actus. Ac ita Themistius ita transfert, et Ieronimus *Ad Paulinam:* viva vox habet nescio quod latentis energie. Et idem habet Iustinus in articulo. Et Plutarcus, libro 4 *De placitis Philosophorum*, dicit quod secundum Aristotelem anima est mortalis. Probat: nam omnis anima est enthelechia, id est actus corporis;

According to the *reportator* of the ms. Barcelona, Biblioteca Universitaria 16-2-22, in that passage Vitoria mentioned together Cicero, Budé, Argyropoulos, and the *Miscellanea* of the famous humanist Angelo Poliziano: not exactly a corpus of traditional scholastic masters; even less, a « lack of interest for humanism ».[81]

These considerations do not want to deny how much Vitoria and Domingo de Soto benefited from masters like Almain and Mair. But we cannot dismiss that they were also shaped by significant humanist influences, which they themselves integrated into their commentaries by incorporating innovations arising from the study of classical texts in their original languages.

From a broader perspective, it therefore seems possible to maintain that, in Italy as well as in the Iberian Peninsula, France, and the German Empire, the traditional teaching of philosophy in universities and religious *studia* was substantially affected by humanism. This process of intellectual osmosis unfolded along four essential lines: (1) the unprecedented availability of texts in their original languages; (2) the presence of teachers of Greek capable of training new generations in the critical discussion of texts; (3) a renewed interest among the educated public in philological debate; and (4) the new and indispensable support of the printing press, which made it necessary to adopt systematic criteria for the textual editing of classical and medieval works. Together, these four elements delineate the difference between medieval and Renaissance philosophical practices.

II.4. Analysis of Argument (*b*): New Texts and Problems

In §4.2, Marenbon advances a second interpretive hypothesis concerning the nature of Renaissance philosophy, which he characterizes as « more robust ». According to this view, the distinctive character of Renaissance philosophy is to be sought in a significant transformation of the textual tradition.[82] This hypothesis

ergo est corruptibilis sicut corpus. Et ita translatio nostra habet: anima est actus corporis. Et salvant Ciceronem quia Greci communiter scribunt enthelechiam et proferunt cum t, et non cum d, ut proferunt athici. Et ipse fuit athicus. Sed hic non agimus de voce et probatione, sed de re ». Cf. Guillaume Budé', *De asse*, Sébastien Gryphe, Lyon 1515, p. viir-ixv; Luigi A. Sanchi, « Per la ricezione di Poliziano in Francia: spunti dall'opera erudita di Guillaume Bude », *Archivum Mentis*, 3 (2014 [2015]), p. 233–246: 239; Id., « Guillaume Budé et ses devanciers italiens: à propos des commentaires de la langue grecque », *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 65/3 (2003), p. 641–653.

81 Franciscus de Vitoria, *Super Primam Partem*, in Barcelona, Biblioteca de la Universitat de Barcelona, ms. 16-2-22, q. 75, art. 1: « Graeci accusant Ciceronem quod non recte interpretatur Aristotelem et merito accusant, inquit Budeus. Nam apud graecos (ait Argiropilus) sunt duo nomina, scilicet endelechia, quod significant actum, per t; sed endelechiam per d significant motionem continuam. Angelus Politianus defendit Ciceronem sed re vera non bene ».

82 Marenbon, p. 24: « Those wishing to make shallow period divisions in text-based disciplines look primarily to changes in textual traditions ».

naturally alludes to the rediscovery of the ancient and late-antique Greek philosophical corpus – such as Platonism, Skepticism, Aristotelian commentators, and Epicureanism – which was translated into Latin for the first time by the humanists discussed in the preceding section. Against this interpretation, Marenbon raises two critical objections intended to demonstrate its inadequacy:

1. Firstly, these newly available texts did not become integrated into university curricula (p. 25: « these newly available texts did not become part of the university Arts curriculum, where Aristotle remained supreme well on into the seventeenth century »).
2. Secondly, these texts allegedly failed to stimulate genuinely new intellectual perspectives, insofar as the philosophical contents in question were already substantially known within medieval scholasticism (p. 25: « Were these texts being introduced for the first time, in any case, and to what extent, within the strand of philosophers where they were used, did they open up new intellectual horizons? »).

In support of this second point, Marenbon briefly surveys a series of historical considerations. According to Marenbon, although scholastic philosophers did not possess the Platonic dialogues as a whole, the *Timaeus* nonetheless sufficed to inform them about Plato's philosophy in its broader outlines.[83] Elements of Plotinus's thought, moreover, were known through Augustine, while Proclus was accessible through Boethius and the Pseudo-Dionysius (p. 25). Stoicism, for its part, was thoroughly familiar to Peter Abelard;[84] Epicureanism was likewise already well known to Abelard; and Skepticism, finally, « received sophisticated discussion from the twelfth century onwards » (p. 26).

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Marenbon's arguments against the hypothesis of a change in textual tradition are of considerable interest, insofar as they invite a reassessment of textual transmission in light of its concrete effects. Thanks to the work of Marcia Colish, we know to what extent the Latin world, already before the sixth century, was familiar with Stoicism and influenced by it: indeed, the development of Stoicism in the Renaissance would not have been the same without the mediation of the

[83] Marenbon, p. 26: « thinkers made imaginative and wide-ranging use of it [*scil.* Plato's work], finding, for instance, and using in their discussions, the main details of the argument of the *Republic* from the opening of the *Timaeus* ».

[84] Marenbon, p. 25–26: « It is unlikely that any philosopher since ancient times until Spinoza had closer parallels with so many aspects of Stoic doctrine than Abelard ».

Latin Middle Ages.[85] At the same time, however, we must ask whether this fact is sufficient to downplay the innovations that characterized the study of Stoicism from the fifteenth century onward.[86] These innovations were not limited to the textual corpus, which now included the first Latin translation of Epictetus and of the Stoic dossiers by Diogenes Laertius. A more important innovation is the self-awareness of some intellectuals that they constituted a new school of thought, one that explicitly identified itself as (neo-)Stoic and produced works with the aim of distinguishing itself as such. In this sense, Justus Lipsius's *De constantia* (1584) represents a turning point in the medieval and early modern tradition of Stoicism: as John Sellars observes, with Lipsius « the fortunes of Stoicism changed dramatically ».[87]

The same approach may also be extended to all the case studies examined by Marenbon. As Henrik Lagerlund has clearly observed, the Middle Ages did not produce genuinely skeptical philosophers, with only a few exceptions (e.g. John of Salisbury, drawing on Cicero).[88] Even Nicholas of Autrecourt (1299–1369) was regarded as a skeptic only *secundum quid*, insofar as he did not conceive of himself as such (*simpliciter*) and was in fact developing an anti-skeptical epistemology.[89]

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[85] Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, Brill, Leiden 1985 (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 34). See also Jacqueline Lagrée, *Juste Lipse et la restauration du stoïcisme : étude et traduction des traités stoïciens* De la constance, Manuel de philosophie stoïcienne, Physique des stoïciens *(extraits)*, Vrin, Paris 1994 (Philologie et Mercure); Gerard Verbeke, *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1983; Sten Ebbesen, « Where Were the Stoics in the Late Middle Ages? », in Steven K. Strange, Jack Zupko (eds.), *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 108–131.

[86] Cf. Kraye, « From Medieval to Early Modern Stoicism», p. 23: « [...] I hope I have been able to show that, despite many continuities, the disruption occasioned by the Renaissance recovery of Greek Stoic texts unknown in the Middle Ages gave rise to a new set of attitudes towards Stoicism and its different phases, with the late period considered to be, until the mid-seventeenth century, the school's philosophical highpoint ».

[87] John Sellars, « Stoicism in the Renaissance », in Marco Sgarbi (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, Springer, Cham 2017, *sub voce*; Kraye, « From Medieval to Early Modern Stoicism», p. 12: « In any discussion of Stoicism's revival in the Renaissance, pride of place must be given to Justus Lipsius, who contributed more than any other scholar both to the recovery of ancient Stoic thought and to its restoration as a living philosophy adapted to the needs of contemporary Christians ».

[88] Henrik Lagerlund, « A History of Skepticism in the Middle Ages », in Id. (ed.), *Rethinking the History of Skepticism. The Missing Medieval Background*, Brill, Leiden 2010 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 103), p. 1–28: 10: « As will be evident from this book discussions of skepticism increase rapidly in medieval philosophy after the late thirteenth century, but even though this is the case there where not many skeptics in the Middle Ages ».

[89] Lagerlund, *A History of Skepticism*, p. 20; Christophe Grellard, « Nicholas of Autrecourt's Skepticism: The Ambivalence of Medieval Epistemology », in Lagerlund (ed.), *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, p. 119–144; Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen, « The Quest for Certain Knowledge in the Fourteenth Century: Nicholas of Autrecourt against the Academics », in Juha Sihvola (ed.), *Ancient*

This circumstance further confirms the difficulty of speaking of a medieval skeptical tradition, as opposed to the presence of merely sporadic skeptical arguments.

The Middle Ages – already from the Patristic period – were undoubtedly familiar with skeptical doctrines, as synthesized by Cicero in the *Academica* and summarized by Augustine in the *Contra Academicos*. Marenbon rightly points to a Latin translation of Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, the circulation and impact of which, however, remain unknown – if indeed it had any impact at all. In any case, the absence of a direct textual tradition and of significant circulation helps to explain why scholastic philosophy does not exhibit a properly skeptical 'school', *i.e.* a group of philosophers who recognized themselves as skeptic, and methodically adopted a skeptical approach in order to weaken other systematic thoughts. At most, scholastics used skeptical arguments, which were largely derived from Cicero and Augustine. By contrast, the Renaissance is marked by two salient features in this respect: (1) the availability of new information through indirect transmission, especially via Diogenes Laertius; and (2) the emergence of a group of philosophers who explicitly self-identified with Skepticism.[90] The first of these was Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), in the *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium* (1520)[91], followed by Francisco Sanches's work *Quod nihil scitur* (1581), as well as by Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592)[92], and Pierre Charron (1541–1603).[93] These latter figures benefited directly from Henri Estienne's 1562 edition of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, which expounded the skeptical corpus with a direct source.[94] They can be regarded as a genuinely skeptical tradition *simpliciter*, insofar as they acted with full awareness to critique and dismantle ancient or scholastic systems of thought (first, Aristotelianism).

Scepticism and the Sceptical Tradition, Societas Philosophica Fennica, Helsinki 2000 (Acta Philosophica Fennica, 66), p. 199-223.

90 On this point see Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism, from Erasmus to Spinoza*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1979.

91 On Pico see the excellent work by Gian Mario Cao, *Scepticism and orthodoxy: Gianfrancesco Pico as a reader of Sextus Empiricus; with a Facing Text of Pico's Quotations from Sextus*, Fabrizio Serra Editore, Pisa 2007 (Bruniana and Campanelliana. Ricerche filosofiche e materiali storico-testuali, 22.3).

92 See at least Ann Hartle, « Montaigne and Scepticism », in Ullrich Langer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005 (The Cambridge Companions to Philosophy and Religion), p. 183–206.

93 On Charron see José R. Maia Neto, *Academic Skepticism in Seventeenth-Century French Philosophy: The Charronian Legacy 1601-1662*, Springer, Cham 2014 (International Archives of the History of Ideas / Archives internationales d'histoire des idées, 215).

94 Luciano Floridi, « The Diffusion of Sextus Empiricus's Works in the Renaissance », *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56/1 (1995), p. 63–85; Jose R. Maia Neto, Gianni Paganini, John C. Laursen (eds.), *Skepticism In the Modern Age. Building on the Work of Richard Popkin*, Brill, Leiden 2009 (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 181).

Another domain in which humanism appears to have concretely stimulated the emergence of new horizons of philosophical debate is Epicureanism. That Epicurean doctrines had been circulating since at least the twelfth century is now well established, thanks above all to the seminal work of Aurélien Robert – whom, surprisingly, Marenbon never mentions on this issue.[95] This however is not the point. The real point is to acknowledge that humanism after Bracciolini provided a new impetus to the study of Epicureanism, in terms of intensity.[96] With Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457), we witness a genuine challenge to Aristotelian ethics, supplanted by a new theory of pleasure. This undertaking was pursued in a systematic manner through three foundational works of Renaissance thought: *De voluptate* (1431), *De vero falsoque bono* (1433), and the *Dialecticae Disputationes* (1449–1457).[97]

Raphael Ebgi has shown the extent to which the young Marsilio Ficino was connected to these doctrines, to the point of attributing to him a true 'philosophy of pleasure'.[98] The construction of this new philosophical perspective is commonly associated with several factors: the rediscovery of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* in 1417; Traversari's Latin translation of Diogenes Laertius's *Vita Epicuri* in 1433; and, above all, Rinuccio Aretino's Latin translation of a dossier of Greek letters on the madness of Democritus, derived from a manuscript from Piacenza.[99] The development of these debates on Epicureanism – whether in support of or in opposition to it – constitutes a distinctive feature of fifteenth-century philosophy, owing to the systematic manner in which the discussion was conducted and to the availability of a broader range of both direct and indirect sources. Investigating into this new context – which depended on a new textual basis! – will allow the reader to understand how much the circulation of Epicurean philosophy developed from twelfth to fifteenth century. The ability to distinguish the original

[95] Aurelien Robert, *Épicure aux enfers. Héresie, athéisme et hédonisme au Moyen Âge*, Fayard, Paris 2021 (Fayard Histoire).

[96] See, on this point, Alison Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2010 (I Tatti studies in Italian Renaissance history, 2).

[97] Lodi Nauta, « The Price of Reduction: Problems in Valla's Epicurean Fideism », in Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, Eckhard Kessler (eds.), *Ethik – Wissenschaft oder Lebenskunst? Modelle der Normenbegründung von der Antike bis zur Frühen Neuzeit*, LIT Verlag, Berlin 2007 (Pluralisierung & Autorität, 8), p. 173–195; Maristella De Panizza Lorch, « The Epicurean in Lorenzo Valla's *On Pleasure* », in Margaret J. Osler, (ed). *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 89–114.

[98] Raphael Ebgi, *Voluptas. La filosofia del piacere nel giovane Marsilio Ficino (1457–1469)*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2019 (Clavis, 7).

[99] Sebastiano Gentile, « Ficino, Epicuro e Lucrezio », in James Hankins, Fabrizio Meroi (eds.), *The Rebirth of Platonic Theology*, Firenze, Olschki 2013 (Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento. Atti di convegni, 27), p. 119–136. On Aretino's translation see Dean P. Lockwood, « De Rinucio Aretino Graecarum Litterarum Interprete », *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 24 (1913), p. 51–109: 89–93.

views of Plato, Aristotle, or Sextus Empiricus, from the expositions offered by Calcidius, Averroes, or Cicero, constituted one of the most characteristic preoccupations of philosophers engaged in commentary from the fifteenth century onward.

I would like, finally, to dwell on the circulation of the thought of Plato and the Neoplatonic philosophers, above all Plotinus. That the Middle Ages as a whole – not merely the scholastic tradition – were acquainted with Platonic thought is a self-evident fact. Indeed, if one were to apply Marenbon's criterion of 'indirect sources', one might even argue that Aristotle's *Metaphysica* alone was sufficient to mediate the circulation of a wide range of Platonic doctrines. The problem, however, lies in attributing the transmission of Plato exclusively to the *Timaeus* (and its associated commentary), or that of Plotinus solely to Augustine. Such an approach, indeed, entirely bypasses the crucial distinction between direct and indirect sources. This distinction may well appear superfluous from a modern analytic perspective. Yet, if we wish to understand what actually took place in the fifteenth-century *Studia* across Europe, it becomes indispensable. The 'new' – and often almost obsessive – engagement with primary texts in original languages constitutes the keystone for understanding the philosophy of the fifteenth century.

Marenbon makes a problematic claim, when he says that « [...] the fact that from the fifteenth century people could read a range of Plato's own dialogues made much less difference than it might have done, because usually the overall frame of interpretation was still that of Plotinus and later Platonism ».[100] Since the 1970s, John Monfasani has been studying and editing the texts and figures involved in an intellectual debate known as the 'Plato-Aristotle Controversy', which originated at a specific place and time: in Mistra, with Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452). Through the Council of Ferrara-Florence, the controversy was transmitted to Italy, where it generated one of the most significant philosophical debates of the following 150 years. Intellectuals from across Europe and the Byzantine world took part in it, including figures such as Nicholas of Cusa from the German lands; Byzantine scholars like George of Trebizond, Theodorus Gaza, and Bessarion; and Iberian humanists such as Alfonso de Palencia.[101]

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[100] MARENBON, p. 26.

[101] On this point see JOHN MONFASANI, « Cardinal Bessarion's Greek and Latin Sources in the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the 15th Century and Nicholas of Cusa's Relation to the Controversy », in ANDREAS SPEER, PHILIPP STEINKRÜGER (ed.), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, Berlin, De Gruyter 2012 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 36), p. 469–480; ID., « Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy », in MICHAEL J. ALLEN, VALERY REES (eds.), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, Brill, Leiden 2002 (Brill's studies in Intellectual History, 108), p. 179–202; ID., « Aristotle as the Scribe of Nature: The Frontispiece of Vat. Lat. 2094 and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the Fifteenth Century », *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 69 (2006), p. 193–205; ID., « The Humanists and the Plato-Aristotle

From the Controversy there emerged in Florence a famous debate concerning the primacy of the One over Being, involving Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (*De ente et uno*, 1491), Marsilio Ficino (*In Parmenidem*, 1494), Francesco Cattani da Diacceto (*De pulchro*, 1499), and, later on, Gasparo Contarini (*Compendium primae philosophiae*, 1527).[102] These thinkers disagreed sharply over the priority of the One with respect to Being, at times emphasizing a Proclean, hypostatic exegesis, at others a Porphyrian one, and ultimately finding themselves in profound disagreement over Plato's own *ratio*.[103] Consequently, it seems difficult to reduce the circulation of Platonic thought in the Renaissance to a merely derivative or uncritical exposition of late Platonism, as this was far from homogeneous.

Another pivotal point to consider is that – contrary to Marenbon's assertion[104] – the Controversy did in fact have significant implications for the university milieu. It involved numerous intellectuals across Italy, many of whom were humanists holding teaching positions, with the case of Theodorus Gaza at Ferrara being perhaps the most emblematic. Simone Fellina, Maude Vanhaelen, and Eva del Soldato have recently shown the extent to which, in the sixteenth century, the contraposition between Plato with Aristotle – sometimes even of replacing the latter with the former – was actively debated in university teaching.[105] That such

Controversy of the Fifteenth Century », in Chiara Continisio, Marcello Fantoni (eds.), *Testi e contesti per Amedeo Quondam*, Bulzoni, Roma 2016 (Biblioteca del Cinquecento, 158), p. 79–94.

[102] Giuseppe Martano, « Il *Parmenide* e il *Sofista* in un'interpretazione teologica di Pico della Mirandola », in *Studi Pichiani. Atti e memorie del Convegno di Studi Pichiani per il V Centenario della nascita di G. Pico della Mirandola (Modena – Mirandola, 25-26 maggio 1963)*, Aedes Muratoriana, Modena 1965, p. 119–125; Silvia Magnavacca, « El *De Ente et Uno*: una ontologia augustiniana », *Patristica et Medievalia*, 11 (1990), p. 3–26; Stephan Toussaint, « Humanisme et vérité », in Id., *L'esprit du Quattrocento. Le* De Ente et Uno *de Pic de la Mirandole*, Honoré Champion, Paris 1995 (Constance de la philosophie, 1), p. 9–124; Francesca Lazzarin, « Introduzione », in Marsilio Ficino, *Commento al* «Parmenide» *di Platone*, ed. Francesca Lazzarin, Olschki, Firenze 2012 (Immagini della ragione, 15), p. vii-clxx: lxxxix-ci; Raphael Ebgi, « Il *De ente et uno*: fiore raro dell'Umanesimo italiano », in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Dell'Ente e dell'Uno*, ed. Raphael Ebgi, Franco Bacchelli, Bompiani, Milano 2010/11 (Bompiani Testi a fronte, 133), p. 43-157; Luca Burzelli, « '*Unum indivisum*'. Il problema dell'uno da Pico a Contarini », in Gianluca Garelli, Anna Rodolfi (eds.), *Fructibus construere folia. Omaggio a Vittoria Perrone Compagni*, Società Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 2020 (Biblioteca Palazzeschi, 19), p. 161–175; Christopher Celenza, « Francesco Cattani da Diacceto's '*De pulchro*', II.4, and the Practice of Renaissance Platonism », *Accademia*, 9 (2007), p. 87–98.

[103] On the porphyrian interpretation, see Riccardo Chiaradonna, « Nota su partecipazione e atto d'essere nel neoplatonismo: l'anonimo *Commento al Parmenide* », *Studia graeco-arabica*, 2 (2012), p. 87–97. On the circulation of these two platonic lines in the Renaissance, see Luca Burzelli, « Uno-Essere-Molteplice », in Michele Ciliberto (ed.), *L'età nuova. Umanesimo e Rinascimento,* 4 vols., Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2025, vol. III, p. 901–912.

[104] Marenbon, p. 25: « these newly available texts did not become part of the university Arts curriculum ».

[105] Simone Fellina, *Platone Allo Studium Fiorentino-Pisano (1576–1635). L'insegnamento Di Francesco De' Vieri, Jacopo Mazzoni, Carlo Tomasi, Cosimo Boscagli, Girolamo Bardi*, Scripta, Verona 2019 (Bonae

reforms did not always occur at the institutional level is not sufficient, *ipso facto*, to conclude that there was no debate concerning the relative priority of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle in the universities.

Moreover, it can be documented that traditional academic professors, while remaining committed to their task of commenting on the Aristotelian corpus, increasingly incorporated Platonic doctrines and questions that had recently become available in Latin translation and were widely circulating. In his commentary on *De generatione et corruptione* (1521–1523), the 'hyper-Aristotelian' Pietro Pomponazzi felt compelled to devote nearly two full lectures (part of *lectio* 35 and the entirety of *lectio* 36) to discussing the doctrine of Porphyry, Plotinus, and Marsilio Ficino, as presented in Book VII of the *Theologia Platonica*, concerning the indivisibility of the human soul. I have compared it with commentaries by Richard Rufus, Albert the Great, Aquinas, or Buridan: beyond standard references to the doctrine of the elements in the *Timaeus*, I found nothing analogous. By contrast, similar discussions do appear in Ludovico Boccadiferro,[106] and more generally in the commentaries of Agostino Nifo.

II.5. Identity and Difference of Renaissance Philosophy

At this point, a reader might legitimately ask whether a distinct essence existed for Renaissance philosophical thought – and, if so, what that essence might have been. In this respect, I find it entirely appropriate to acknowledge the extent to which both Medieval and Renaissance philosophy were engaged in the analysis of ancient thought, thereby challenging older periodizations that were excessively compartmentalizing. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that there were moments of quantitative and qualitative transformation in the academic sphere, in which the material availability and accessibility of texts fostered new approaches and perspectives of reflection, teaching, and publishing.[107]

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artes. Fondazione Centro studi Leon Battista Alberti, 5); Eva Del Soldato, Maude Vanhaelen (eds.), *Teaching Plato in Italian Renaissance universities*, Brepols, Turnhout 2024 (Studia Artistarum, 51).

[106] Ludovicus Buccaferreus, *In duos libros Aristotelis De generatione et corruptione*, apud Franciscum de Franciscis, Venetiis 1571, fol. 72b. As Bianchi, *Studi sull'Aristotelismo nel Rinascimento*, p. 127–128, suggested, Boccadiferro lies at the border between 'scholastic aristotelianism' and 'humanistic aristotelianism' exactly for his interest in Platonic doctrines, and for his expertise in Greek commentators like Olympiodorus, Simplicius, Themistius and Philoponus. See also Eugenio Garin, *Umanisti, artisti, scienziati: studi sul Rinascimento italiano*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1989 (Nuova biblioteca di cultura, 301), p. 143.

[107] This objection is already underlined by Bianchi, « Un lungo medioevo? », p. 404: « È comunque difficile sottrarsi all'impressione che egli sottolinei più del dovuto alcune costanti, alcune permanenze, e sottovaluti invece delle discontinuità che è impossibile considerare superficiali ». In this respect, a good comprehensive approach is adopted by Monfasani, « The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages », p. 175–177, who underlines both the elements of

On this point, one should ask themselves to what extent the transformation in question is *enough* to determine a change: how deeply has the intellectual landscape changed from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century? Marenbon would say that the change was limited; by contrast, others would argue that the change was profound.[108] I support this second interpretation. In my view, the impact of fifteenth-century humanism on the teaching of philosophy was decisive, insofar as it introduced new texts and new methods, all of which can be well documented. Pedagogical practices were no longer the same, and professors were fully aware of this shift: all the cases examined thus far conform to this framework. As Matthew Gaetano clearly emphasizes (in Edelheit's volume, p. 198–199), a mid-fifteenth-century professor such as Girolamo Vielmi openly defined himself as distinct from – and superior to – his scholastic predecessors like Aquinas precisely because he knew Greek. In this respect, the teaching method was understood by Renaissance professors as an essential criterion of distinction.

The invention of printing further intensified this transformation, as professors and humanists were increasingly required to assume the role of editors of Latin, Greek, Jewish, and Arabic texts – a task they had never previously been required to perform.[109] In addition, the establishment of institutes devoted to linguistic comparison (Greek, Latin, and Hebrew) during the Renaissance constitutes the clearest evidence of this transformation at the institutional level within the faculties of Arts. One might object that William of Moerbeke already represented a proto-humanist figure in the thirteenth century, and I would agree on this characterization; but this is true only *accidentaliter*. Moerbeke is neither qualitatively nor quantitatively comparable to figures such as Lorenzo Valla or Theodore Gaza, whether in terms of the number of manuscripts used and translated, or (above all) with respect to his general approach, as he never adopted a systematic philological criterion (e.g., through *collatio*, *emendatio*, *conjecturae*...) in order to comment. By contrast, these two parameters constitute the cornerstone of philosophical practices in the fifteenth century.

continuity and the unquestionable self-perception of Italian Renaissance intellectuals (and, later, of the seventeenth-century French ones) to embody a different tradition.

[108] A point similar to mine is presented also by James Hankins, « Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance philosophy », in Id. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007 (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy), p. 30–48: 46: « The humanist movement greatly enriched the study of philosophy in the Renaissance as it did in many other aspects of European culture ». On the other side, I would not say, like Hankins, that humanism did not produce great philosophers, nor would I consider Machiavelli and Montaigne simply as '*provocateurs*'.

[109] On this topic, see Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2012; Eugene F. Rice – Anthony Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York – London 1994², p. 1–10; Kristeller, « The Impact of Early Italian Humanism », p. 71; Reynolds, Wilson, *Copisti e filologi*, p. 140–144.

One might further object that such 'textual' changes within the universities are not sufficiently conspicuous to warrant speaking of an epochal transformation. This objection, however, disregards the broader context beyond the university. On this point, I wish to be very clear. Up to this stage, I have deliberately confined my discussion to philosophy *within* the universities, in order to remain on the same analytical ground as Marenbon. The crucial point is that, when we deal with fifteenth and sixteenth century, we cannot abstract from what was occurring outside the universities. Those broad cultural developments, in fact, decisively shaped the identity of an entire epoch. Beyond the academic sphere, it is worth recalling that the impact of new texts and intellectual figures was registered across the cultural landscape of two centuries, shaping their artistic-literary expressions, political thought, and natural knowledge. The intellectual humanistic world as a whole – not merely the universities – was transformed by renewed contact with antiquity, now made accessible through Latin translation. Figures such as Lorenzo Valla, Leonardo Bruni, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Michel de Montaigne, cannot be dismissed or marginalized simply because they did not hold university teaching positions.[110] They all brought about a profound transformation within their respective disciplines: political thought after Machiavelli – an avid reader of Lucretius – was no longer the same; Valla is rightly counted among the founders of textual criticism; and Montaigne – another reader of Lucretius – was the first to break with the anthropocentric and Eurocentric perspective that had long shaped philosophical reflection.[111]

The contribution of these and many other intellectuals to the essence of their time (and arguably of our own) is far more significant than what Marenbon's stringent criteria would allow. They demonstrate that the change was a broader process, which occurred both within and beyond the universities. The society as a whole, beginning with the civic magistracies, was affected by the impact of the development of humanism, a phenomenon unprecedented in its intensity when compared to the scholastic Middle Ages. Anyone who might object that Alcuin had already developed a comparable pedagogical model would have to confront a crucial fact: the *Schola Palatina* was little more than a cenacle of a few individuals,

[110] In this respect, we cannot underestimate the impact of some fundamental works which shaped the political and naturalistic debate of the century. Leonardo Bruni translated Arisotle's *Politica* and *Ethica ad Nichomacum*, which served as fundamental text for the entire 15th century political milieu. Concerning the natural philosophy, one should not forget the impact of Jacopo da San Cassiano's translation of Archimedes's corpus. See Paolo d'Alessandro, Pier Daniele Napolitani, *Archimede Latino. Iacopo da San Cassiano e il corpus archimedeo alla metà del Quattrocento*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2012 (Sciences et savoirs, 1); Stefano Pagliaroli, *Iacopo Cassiano e l'Arenario di Archimede,* Centro interdipartimentale di studi umanistici, Messina 2012 (Percorsi dei classici, 20).

[111] Cf. Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, ch. 1; Nicola Panichi, « Montaigne lettore di Lucrezio. Le postille al *De rerum natura* », *Philosophia*, 2 (2018), p. 29–59.

whereas in the fifteenth century we witness a vast expansion of humanistic practices that reshaped the educational and political institutions of the time.

Focusing on the academia, in the fifteenth century, thanks to the interaction between humanists and university professors, there was a qualitative leap in both the knowledge of and reflection on a substantial portion of ancient thought – areas that, in the Scholastic Middle Ages, except for occasional flourishing, had not received systematic attention.[112] Renaissance professors across Europe understood that they could no longer confine themselves to commenting on *Aristoteles* and the *Averroes Latinus*, but were required to engage – both in their teaching and in their writings – with late-antique doxography (with figures such as Themistius, Simplicius, and Philoponus), which appeared to offer the most innovative and reliable sources for reconstructing the *ratio Aristotelis*.[113] Many professors made strategic use of the printing systems in order to fix this new doxography in written form: one may think of the extensive commentaries produced by Nifo and Boccadiferro, or of Marcantonio Zimara's ingenious project of creating a comparative *tabula* of the entire Aristotelian corpus. Finally, university philosophy came also to recognize that Aristotle did not always appear reliable and that his authority had to be questioned in light of new empirical evidence. For example, the geographical explorations of the late fifteenth century marked a turning point in the exegesis of the *Meteorologica* and helped to expose the fallibility of Aristotelian thought.[114]

If we seek an emblem of this new phase in the university teaching of philosophy, we should not look to figures such as Gabriel Biel or John Mair (as Marenbon does), but rather to Johannes Eck (1486–1543).[115] Eck was trained under

[112] In this respect I must disagree with Eugenio Garin, *L'umanesimo Italiano*, Roma – Bari, Laterza 1994, p. 18: « Il tema del 'ritorno a Platone' richiama qui un Vecchio e sempre nuovo equivoco, e cioè l'idea che l'umanesimo sia stato determinato e caratterizzato dalla conoscenza di nuovi testi classici prima ignorati; la lettura di Cicerone, di Lucrezio e di Seneca, di Platone e di Plotino avrebbe rinnovato la cultura; un aumento quantitativo di letture classiche si sarebbe trasformato in un salto qualitativo ». This observation by Garin seems to bypass entirely the problem of the relationship between humanistic culture and the scholastic philosophical tradition – and, indeed, Garin's overall approach to humanism is mostly tied to extra-academic figures (Salutati, Bracciolini, Alberti).

[113] See, for instance, Bianchi, *Studi sull'Aristotelismo nel Rinascimento*, p. 127–128, on Boccadiferro and Simplicius.

[114] On this point see Craig Martin, « Experience of the New World and Aristotelian Revisions of the Earth's Climates during the Renaissance », *History of Meteorology*, 3 (2006), p. 1–16; Reijer Hooykaas, *Humanism and the Voyages of Discovery in 16th-century Portuguese Science and Letters*, Noord-Hollandsche U. M., Amsterdam 1979 (Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van wetenschapen, AFD. Letterkunde, 42/4).

[115] Max Ziegelbauer, *Johannes Eck, Mann der Kirche im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung*, EOS-Verlag, Sanct Ottilien 1987; Erwin Iserloh, *Johannes Eck (1486–1543): Scholastiker, Humanist, Kontroverstheologe*, Aschendorff-Verlag, Münster 1981 (Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, 41).

German humanists; then he became professor of theology and philosophy at Ingolstadt. He translated the Bible into Latin, and edited a commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* (1520) where he gathered an elephantine apparatus of references to late-antique Greek commentators. Eck truly embodies the connection of the humanistic milieu with scholastic philosophy, and the development of new editorial strategies for the production of innovative scholarly works. Anyone inclined to doubt this need only consider whom the Roman Curia dispatched to debate with the Lutherans: not a scholastic professor from Leuven or Paris, but Eck and Aleandro. The main theological controversy of the sixteenth century was lead by philologists (Eck, Aleandro, Melanchthon, Erasmus).

To overlook these differences in content and method is to flatten the processes of knowledge transfer across these two centuries, reducing them to an undifferentiated flow of mere Aristotelian or Platonic commentaries. We do no great service to medieval philosophical thought if we reduce it to Hegel's 'dark night'. After all, one may say that, *mutatis mutandis*, even Augustine articulated a form of the '*cogito*' as early as the fifth century AC; yet this does not lead us to regard Augustine as the father of modern rationalism.

II.6. Questioning the Periodization of the Long Middle Ages

I confess that, personally, I am not particularly fond of periodizations in general:[116] for instance, labelling Pomponazzi as an 'Averroist', a 'Renaissance' thinker, or a 'scholastic' one contributes very little to understanding the substance of his thought if such labels are not accompanied by appropriate criteria – criteria that are textual, doxographical, or thematic in nature. Nevertheless, the ability to delimit the scope of one's investigation remains a crucial operation, allowing one to navigate the material and account for it with precision.

Marenbon's proposal of a 'Long Middle Ages' is particularly interesting, insofar as this appears coherent at least in one respect: namely, the corpus of texts on which these fifteen centuries of history focused.[117] Yet, one might raise some perplexities regarding the definition of the beginning and end of this long – indeed, very long – period. Marenbon situates the beginning of the Long Middle Ages with the interventions of Plotinus (d. 270) and Porphyry (d. 305 c.), who supposedly established the Aristotelian corpus as the curriculum of the schools (p. 18). In fact, if by '*curriculum*' we mean a study program consciously designed for students and sanctioned at any institutional level, the incorporation of Aristotle

[116] The same 'confession' seems to be shared by KRISTELLER, « The Impact of Early Italian Humanism », p. 67.

[117] It seems almost superfluous to note that the notion of a 'Long Middle Ages' originates with JACQUES LE GOFF, *Un long Moyen Âge*, Fayard, Paris 2004. However, Le Goff develops this idea according to criteria entirely different from those adopted by Marenbon: rather than engaging with the textual corpus of philosophy, he focuses instead on social relations in a broader sense.

only occurred with Iamblichus (250–330).[118] Plotinus was undoubtedly influenced by Aristotle, as Riccardo Chiaradonna has shown – whom Marenbon does not cite on this decisive point.[119] However, within the Plotinian circle, Aristotle's presence had not yet assumed institutional dimensions. This consideration would at least require postponing the beginning of the Long Middle Ages by nearly a century, perhaps to the foundation of the School of Apamea in 304 AC.

Yet this possibility also encounters difficulties. Iamblichus may have established the exegesis of the Aristotelian text within his own school, but he was certainly not the first, nor did he intervene in other schools. Commentary on Aristotelian texts had been a well-established practice in the Peripatetic School for centuries. Philosophers such as Aspasius (100–150 c.), Herminus (fl. second century), and Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. second to third centuries) all lived before Plotinus;[120] and yet, technically, they should also fall within Marenbon's definition of the Long Middle Ages, as through their commentaries they « acted as main instruments for transmitting the ancient tradition » (p. 18). Hence, if one wishes to adhere strictly to Marenbon's criteria, the beginning of the Long Middle Ages should be backdated by at least a century – that is, to the beginning of the 2nd century CE. Some might even – rightly – propose an even earlier starting point, including figures such as Nicolaus of Damascus (64 BC – 4 AC) or, why not, Boethus of Sidon (75–10 c.).[121] This, of course, would mean to start Medieval philosophy before Christ: can we really accept this?

Regarding the end of the 'Long Middle Ages', Marenbon designates Leibniz (1646–1716) as the terminus, on the grounds that by his time Aristotelian teaching had ceased to be the bread and butter of university curricula. For the sake of brevity, I will leave aside the fact that standard Aristotelian curricula are well

[118] On this point one must consider the fundamental work by Dominic J. O'Meara, « The Curriculum », in Id., *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Clarendon press, Oxford 2005, p. 61–68. See also Adrian Lecerf, « Iamblichus and Julian's 'Third Demiurge': A Proposition », in Eugene Afonasin, John Dillon, John F. Finamore (eds.), *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism*, Brill, Leiden 2012 (Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts. Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 13), p. 177–202; Marie-Odile Goulet-Caze, « L'Arrière-plan scolaire de la *Vie de Plotin* », in Porphyre, *La vie de Plotin*, 2 vols., ed. Jean Pepin, Luc Brisson, Vrin, Paris 1982–1992, p. 231–327; Riccardo Chiaradonna, *Porphyry and the Aristotelian Tradition*, in Andrea Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aristotle in Antiquity*, Brill, Leiden 2016 (Brill's Companions to Classical Reception, 7), p. 319–340.

[119] Riccardo Chiaradonna, *Sostanza, Movimento, Analogia. Plotino critico di Aristotele*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2002 (Elenchos, 37).

[120] See on this point Inna Kupreeva, « Aristotelianism in the Second Century AD: Before Alexander of Aphrodisias », in Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion*, p. 138–159; and Cristina Cerami, « Alexander of Aphrodisias », ibid., p. 160–179.

[121] See also Myrto Hatzimichali, « Andronicus of Rhodes and the Construction of the Aristotelian Corpus », in Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion*, p. 77–100; and Andrea Falcon, « Aristotelianism in the First Century BC », p. 101-119.

documented in South American colonies as late as the end of the eighteenth century, both in Chile and Colombia.[122] However, these cases would raise the issue of a global perspective, which is systematically neglected in Marenbon's account.[123] If we focus on the European continent, however, it is clear that Aristotelian philosophy, while remaining a subject of academic study, encountered an unprecedented crisis from the third quarter of the sixteenth century onward. Bernardino Telesio (1509–1588) provides perhaps the clearest indication of this decline, together with the waning of Aristotelian hylomorphism.[124]

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seem to fit 'with difficulty' into Marenbon's periodization. From the fifteenth century onward, while still adhering to a traditional curriculum, teachers came to realize that they could no longer comment on Aristotelian texts in the same manner as their fourteenth-century predecessors. As Olga Weijers highlighted, even the traditional style of the *quaestio* changed across the decades, from the mid-fourteenth century.[125] New philological tools and new exegetical corpora were now beginning to reshape the practice of commentary: we should not forget that now students in the classes often new the Greek. Textual exegesis began to be systematically accompanied by textual criticism, and new academic roles were institutionalized to support the teaching of theology and philosophy alongside the study of languages. Just as the universities of the thirteenth century incorporated the Aristotelian–Averroist corpus, from the fifteenth century onward the entire landscape of academic philosophy responded to the rediscovery of ancient thought, placing it in dialogue with Aristotelianism.

Also seventeenth-century French universities were marked by a conflict between Aristotelian traditionalism and emerging philosophies, foremost among them that of Descartes.[126] Extending the Long Middle Ages into the eighteenth

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[122] See at least Walter B. Redmond, *Bibliography of Philosophy in the Iberian Colonies of America*, M. Nijhoff, The Hague 1972 (International Archives of the History of Ideas – Archives internationales d'histoire des idées, 51); Celina Anna Lértora Mendoza, *Fuentes para el Estudio de las Ciencias Exactas en Colombia*, Academia Colombiana de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Naturales, Bogotá 1995 (Colección Enrique Pérez Arbeláez, 9); Roberto Hofmeister Pich, Alfredo Santiago Culleton, « Scholastica colonialis », *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale*, 52 (2010), p. 25–45.

[123] See, for instance, Enrique Villalba Pérez, *Consecuencias Educativas De La Expulsión De Los Jesuitas De América*, Universidad Carlos III, Madrid 2003 (Biblioteca del Instituto Antonio de Nebrija, 8), p. 115.

[124] See the excellent essays contained in Pietro Daniel Omodeo (ed.), *Bernardino Telesio and the Natural Sciences in the Renaissance*, Brill, Leiden 2019 (Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy and Science, 29).

[125] Olga Weijers, « The Development of the Disputation Between the Middle Ages and Renaissance», in Hamesse, Burnett, Meirinhos (eds.), *Continuities and Disruptions*, p. 139–150.

[126] See the recent and fundamental book by Mattia Mantovani, Davide Cellamare (eds.), *Descartes in the Classroom. Teaching Cartesian Philosophy in the Early Modern Age*, Brill, Leiden 2023 (Medieval and

century, according to Marenbon's criteria, creates a significant exegetical problem in interpreting both Rationalism and the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century, as both movements conceived themselves as openly anti-Aristotelian.

These aporias, both *ex parte ante* and *ex parte post*, reveal certain ambiguities within Marenbon's category of the Long Middle Ages. Uncertainty regarding its decisive starting point – particularly with respect to the notion of a 'curriculum' – as well as its end point, makes it impossible to establish true homogeneity[127] across these fifteen centuries of intellectual history, which are so diverse in terms of geographical context (from Paris to Baghdad), religious practices and institutions (from Zoroastrianism to the Spanish Inquisition), and style (from Augustine's *Confessiones* to Averroes's *De theriaca*).

The concept of 'Medieval philosophy' (as much as 'Long Middle Ages') appears to be a blanket term, running from Aristotle's Lyceum to the foundation of the Yale University (1701). One might easily replace it instead with more precise subdivisions, such as 'Patristics', 'Islamic Philosophy', 'Jewish Philosophy', 'Byzantine Philosophy', 'Scholastic Philosophy'.[128] These labels offer a more fine-grained understanding of the context we are talking about. By contrast, if I were to discover tomorrow the works of the previously unknown master *Lucas de Mantua* (my own invention), the scholarly community would understand very little from my describing him as 'a medieval philosopher' as this, according to Marenbon, would mean everything from Proclus to Leibniz. One might even say that the category we ought truly to dispense with is the so-called 'Medieval Philosophy' – which, by the way, is the greatest invention of Renaissance philosophers![129]

Early Modern Philosophy and Science, 35). See also Monfasani, « The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages », p. 177.

[127] See Bianchi, « Un lungo medioevo? », p. 402, who accuses Marenbon to have just expanded the Middle Ages without discussing its essence. For his part, John Marenbon, « The Long Middle Ages in Philosophy: A Justification », *Thémata. Revista de Filosofía*, 70 (2024), p. 13–40, replies that Bianchi has misunderstood his aim, that is « to designate an area that it is useful to look at together, in a single book or course or conference ».

[128] Cf. Bianchi, « Un lungo medioevo? », p. 410–411: « Per quanto riguarda, in particolare, il concetto di Medioevo, non sono così sprovveduto da immaginare che riusciremo a liberarcene ma possiamo provare a sottrarci progressivamente alla sua influenza adottando scansioni temporali alternative che, come quella da me suggerita, siano più attente alle maggiori trasformazioni di metodo, forme, fonti e contenuti che la ricerca filosofica ha conosciuto ».

[129] On this point see the fundamental book by Andreas Speer, *1000 Jahre Philosophie. Ein anderer Blick auf die Philosophie des 'Mittelalters'*, Brill, Leiden 2023. On the creation of the concept of *aetas media* by Biondo Flavio, see Giuseppe Sergi, *L'idea di Medioevo. Fra storia e senso commune*, Donzelli, Roma 1998 (Virgolette, 9).

It is regrettable to learn from Marenbon that within the Faculty of Philosophy at Cambridge the name of Pietro Pomponazzi is unknown,[130] and, with him, the Renaissance as a whole. This is all the more regrettable (if it is true), when one considers the University of Cambridge's long-standing historical connection with the Italian Renaissance, dating back to figures such as Henry More (1616–1687)[131] and, more recently, Quentin Skinner (1940–), who brilliantly engaged with the philosophical culture of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern periods (I am thinking of *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, edited together with Charles Schmitt). Nevertheless, this oblivion has little to do with the nature or periodization of Pomponazzi's thought as such, or with Renaissance philosophy more broadly. Rather, it reflects a matter of individual choices.

III. *Conclusions*

John Marenbon's chapter offers a significant opportunity for scholars of medieval and Renaissance philosophy, and the author deserves full credit for this. Marenbon challenges researchers to confront the limitations of simplistic reconstructions or superficial syntheses, highlighting ambiguous boundaries, margins, and misunderstood or poorly documented traditions. It is therefore worthwhile to return to his guiding research question and attempt an answer: *what allows us to distinguish Renaissance philosophy from medieval scholastic philosophy*?

As we have seen throughout these pages, three factors shaped not only the broader humanistic culture, but also the very teaching of academic philosophy, from the fifteenth century onward:

1. the ever-increasing availability of manuscripts containing previously unknown or inaccessible texts;[132]

[130] Marenbon, p. 32, fn. 53: « But my most striking evidence is completely anecdotal: when I proposed setting a text by Pomponazzi, no one in the Cambridge Philosophy Faculty (to whom figures such as Anselm, Avicenna, Maimonides, Ockham were familiar, at least by name) had heard of him! ».

[131] See on this point, at least Cecilia Muratori, Gianni Paganini (eds.), *Early Modern Philosophers and the Renaissance Legacy*, Springer, Cham 2016 (International Archives of the History of Ideas / Archives internationales d'histoire des idées, 2020); Sarah Hutton, « Henry More, Ficino and Plotinus: The Continuity of Renaissance Platonism », in Luisa Simonutti (ed.), *Forme Del Neoplatonismo*, Olschki, Firenze 2017 (Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento. Atti di convegni, 25), p. 281–296; Sears Jayne, « Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance », *Comparative Literature*, 4 (1952), p. 214–238; David Leech, « Ficino and Henry More on the Immortality of the Soul », in Stephen Clucas, Peter J. Forshaw, Valery Rees (eds.), *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence*, Brill, Leiden 2011 (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 198), p. 301–316.

[132] In this regard, readers interested in medieval and Renaissance culture should never lose sight of the two foundational studies on the transmission of the classics to the modern world: Remigio Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci nei secoli XIV e XV*, Sansoni, Firenze 1905; and Giorgio Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*, Le Monnier, Firenze 1934.

2. the emergence of new intellectual figures in the milieu outside universities, notably humanists, who introduced a new corpus of previously inaccessible ancient texts, and brought new issues and agendas to which university masters were called to react (see, for instance, Vitoria's debate on the justification of the conquers in the New World); and
3. the medium of print, which exponentially disseminated these new bodies of knowledge and methodologies.

It is important to underline that these factors impacted on the universities, and not only on the extra-academic contexts. Such impact cannot be underestimated. Indeed, new texts and translators brought about a shift in perspective and methodology within a teaching tradition that had been consolidating for three centuries.

The essays contained in the volume edited by Amos Edelheit effectively demonstrate the continuous interaction between the humanistic and scholastic worlds, bringing together professors, translators, friars, Hellenists, Hebraists, and printers. Research in the coming years should focus on these figures and their interactions, on the circulating textual heritage, and on the micro-dynamics within this network of intellectuals. Beyond this, let me say that we have so far been playing with categories. It is worth remembering, they are nothing but labels, often very useless regarding the specific author or topic we are studying. Establishing periodizations can be useful insofar as it concretely helps to reconstruct the cultural context in which a philosopher operated; yet, in itself, it risks devolving into an arid form of speculation. Both medieval and Renaissance studies still possess a vast body of unedited material, that today constitutes a far more pressing challenge than the task of fixing boundaries and labels (which are, almost by definition, partial and restrictive).[133] As Paul Valéry aptly remarks, « one cannot get drunk with the labels on the bottles ».

[133] For the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that in his chapter Marenbon consistently acknowledges the importance of primary sources and is careful to avoid one of the most common errors in recent scholarship: namely, assessing the category of the 'Renaissance' solely on the basis of historiographical debates from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. It is difficult to see how one could establish the self-perception of Renaissance individuals by considering only figures such as Brucker (1696–1770), Burckhardt (1818–1897), or Kristeller (1905–1999), while neglecting textual evidence drawn from the works and university courses of the period itself. Primary sources and documentary evidence must therefore remain our first and main guide.