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Some Recent Views of the Italian Renaissance

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SOME RECENT VIEWS OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

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IN this paper I propose to discuss with you, as my title indicates, some recent works dealing with the period we have long known as the Italian Renaissance and to consider with you some of the more important contributions which have been made in late years to our understanding of this period. Mostly, of course, I shall speak of books and articles published in the last decade, although in some few cases I shall go even farther back than two decades in order to rescue, for this occasion at least, some very valuable studies which have not found their way, for one reason or another, into the modern current of Renaissance bibliography. When I make mention of the Renaissance, you will understand that I mean thereby the fourteenth, fifteenth, and, sometimes, the sixteenth centuries.

Contemporary historians of the Renaissance may be simply and conveniently divided, like so many things, into three classes: there are those who affirm the existence of the Renaissance as a rebirth or revival of man's mind and spirit, based in some important and constructive fashion upon the recovery of ancient culture; secondly, there are those who flatly deny any such renascence and see only continuity in the historical process and only evolution in the gradual changes in European thought and society from the later middle ages to early modern times; and, thirdly, there are those who try to reconcile these divergent views by asserting that there is some truth in the pro-Renaissance position, but that its chief advocates have exaggerated the importance of Graeco-Roman art, literature, and philosophy in effecting a transformation, in the period under discussion, of man's attitude towards himself and the world in which he lives.

Scholars have debated the Renaissance concept and its various implications in its economic, social, and sociological aspects; its scientific, philosophical, and religious interests, purposes, and beliefs; its artistic and humanistic contributions to modern culture; and, finally, in its political, governmental, and diplomatic innovations and achievements. Roughly, very roughly, in the order in which I have named these fields of research (and I shall be extremely superficial in dealing with some of them), I should like to attempt a general bibliographical survey of recent works on the Italian Renaissance and the points of view put forward by their authors in the battle of definition and evaluation which still rages over what our understanding is to be of the period from about 1300 to about 1600. Obviously I can refer to only a few half dozens of outstanding or representative works, but an interest in the Renaissance, in Italy and elsewhere, can be pursued in the bibliographical guides and the thousands of books and articles listed each year in the April number of *Studies in Philology,*[1] and in the annual bulletins prepared by Professor S. H. Thomson on the *Progress of Medieval and Renaissance Studies in the United States and Canada,* which after a lapse of three years will shortly resume publication.

The researches of social and economic historians of the period from the early fourteenth to the later sixteenth centuries have undermined a good deal the old pro-Renaissance position, for they have demonstrated with

[1] Chapel Hill, N.C.

especial clarity the coincident decline of medieval, and the gradual rise of modern, institutions, social patterns, and dominantly significant ideas and attitudes. As representative, almost typical, of several recent studies in the economic and social background of the Italian Renaissance, I should like to begin with Professor Alfred von Martin's *Sociology of the Renaissance,*[2] a work less original than at first glance it may appear to be, but certainly more important than its rather infrequent citation in the literature of the past decade might seem to suggest. Von Martin seeks to depict the sociology of the Renaissance in terms of Max Weber's concept of the ideal type; the influence upon his work of Jakob Burckhardt is very apparent (although his emphases are rather economic than political), and he draws heavily upon the studies, as he acknowledges, of Sombart, Gothein, Doren, Simmel, Caspar, and Engel Janosi. In his analysis of the *bourgeois* "type" of the Renaissance the historical sociologist has made some telling points, even if the critical reader cannot always accept their validity, and some of his generalizations are instructive, even if one sometimes feels the need to qualify them. Since, however, some of these views are basic to an understanding of much recent work in the history of Renaissance philosophy and science, politics, and even art and letters, I should like to be allowed at the outset to consider them at some slight length. In connection with Von Martin's brief study I should like also to deal with another work which traces the transition from feudal to *bourgeois* society, but with different emphases and interests: this is the more formidable and important work of Franz Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild: Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie der Manufakturperiode.*[3] Although Borkenau stresses the close interconnections between economic and social forces, on the one hand, and religious, philosophical, and scientific ideas on the other, he has not attempted an historico-sociological investigation, but rather depicts for us the relationship, in medieval and early modern times, between science and industrial techniques and society and civilization in general; he analyses contemporary economic and political theory, traces the development of scientific method, and brings us face to face, in effective fashion, with various theological and philosophical problems from St. Thomas to Gassendi, Hobbes, and Pascal. The scope of his work is thus extensive, and only the first third of it is relevant to the intellectual and social history of the Renaissance, but after Von Martin's slender volume it is well to read Borkenau, for the latter adds colour, perspective, and detail to some of Von Martin's sketches.

It has long been an historical truism that as one passes in review the history of the later thirteenth and earlier fourteenth centuries one detects in the rise of the *bourgeoisie* new forces and social mutations that prove to be destructive of the authority of the clergy and the chivalry of Europe.[4] The historical sociologist like Von Martin has helped us to appreciate the

[2]Alfred von Martin, *Sociology of the Renaissance* (London, 1944), translated by W. L. Luetkens from *Soziologie der Renaissance*, first published in German in 1932, now in Karl Mannheim's International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction.

[3]Paris, 1934. Schriften des Instituts für Sozialforschung, IV, herausgegeben von Max Horkheimer.

[4]Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild,* has emphasized the importance of this phenomenon in the intellectual history of Europe from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth (45, 54, 78, 89-90, 97 ff.). For additional bibliography on the same subject, see Lynn White, Jr., in *American Historical Review,* LII, 1947, 422-3, note 4.

truth of the truism. The mores of an agrarian society, medieval society, are inevitably conservative; they tend to be dominated by religious precept and prejudice; but change and peculiarity may flourish in an urban community, unnoticed and even encouraged. In the transition from medieval agrarian to Renaissance urban society money, like the philosopher's stone, transmuted into new substances the social bases of the medieval community.[5] In a manorial village a man depended upon the group for its help and its services, and life apart from the group into which he was born was something he could not contemplate. Money, however, in an urban society purchases all necessities and all services, and leaves the individual his independence of any reciprocal obligations to those who perform these services for him, and leaves him also his time and strength for the gratification of whatever personal ambitions and aspirations he may entertain. Medieval society stood on the land and was close to the soil. Renaissance society walked in the town and was footloose. The power of the high *bourgeoisie* was the power of money. Money is a most flexible instrument; it operates ubiquitously; it solves all problems but death, and death is no problem. The clergy and the feudality depended for their continued dominance upon the continuance of the conditions that had given them that dominance, upon the tripartite division of society into those who prayed and those who fought and those who worked (with their hands), as described by medieval theorists who saw in this social structure the ordinance of God. The high *bourgeois* did not fit into this scheme. Inevitably they became hostile to the concept of noble blood; they refused to recognize the contemporary organization of society as the work of God; they rejected the medieval *summa socialis*; and for birth and title they sought to substitute intelligence and enterprise. In the ensuing struggle the chivalric virtues of noble blood and reckless courage were no match for the *bourgeois* virtues of money and of intellect.

More truly Aristotelian than the Church, the *bourgeoisie* trusted in the entelechy, so to speak, of their own individualism—whatever individualism may be—and proceeded therefrom to the elaboration of new social values which might be consonant with their desires for personal power and for fame. The process was a gradual one; there was no critical moment in the history of this development. This so-called new individual had to be strong and self-reliant, for his interests and responsibilities were ceasing to be corporate and were becoming personal. The high *bourgeoisie* became completely rational, calculating, and measured the means, we are informed, solely by the end, without reference to ethical and religious standards. Hitherto, for centuries, the Church had had almost a monopoly of reason, although it was forever restrained in the operation of its reason by its faith in revelation. When, however, in the eyes of the later nominalists, St. Thomas failed to reconcile faith and reason, and when Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, Marsiglio and John of Jandun, Wyclif, John Hus, and others publicized, in theology and in politics, the consequences of that failure, ideological support was furnished, by the centrifugal and individualist tendencies of nominalism, to a position into which, largely unconsciously perhaps, the typical high *bourgeois* had fallen. Thus, in a remarkable

[5]Cf. H. Koht. "Le Problème des origines de la Renaissance" (*Revue de synthèse historique,* XXXVII, 1924, 112-13).

manner, nominalism aided the growth of capitalism and contributed to the dissolution of the medieval social and intellectual hierarchy.[6]

The *bourgeois* respected order and management. He hated violence and contemned the thoughtless extravagance of the feudal noble. He was not much inspired by emotion; he was not much bound by tradition. In Italy the state itself, in the brutal economic and military competition of the high middle ages, came to meet its problems in the same spirit. In the beginning chapters of his famous *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (first published in 1860), Burckhardt emphasized that the Norman-Hohenstaufen kingdom of Sicily and southern Italy provided, on a large scale, a model from which the *condottieri* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries could cut their cloth to make garments smaller, to be sure, but very similar in pattern. Power was attained and maintained by meeting problems in a practical and rational manner; administration was efficient, and the administrators were not sentimental; justice was tempered by expediency; and small worry was spent on constitutional precedent or feudal contract.[7] "The state itself," says Von Martin, "was now becoming a capitalist entrepreneur." In Florence, Genoa, Milan, and, above all, in the Serene Republic on the lagoons of the Adriatic, politics were soberly guided in the interests of commerce and power. The *bourgeois* virtues were admirably exemplified in the statesmen of the Serenissima—shrewd, just, and methodical, not inhumane, sometimes generous, never rash, rarely sentimental. They wanted wealth, for wealth was power and security; but the capitalist spirit is an impatient one, and time soon became a prized commodity. In the more strictly medieval period, when wealth and power resided in the possession of land, time was not at a premium; to the clergy and the nobility the life of their classes appeared to be without end; but there were no means of saving and mobilizing their resources, no way of increasing and accumulating wealth of agrarian origin. But with time the *bourgeois* could increase his wealth and so his power; he was very restive, so much to do and so little time. It is with this social and psychological background in mind, we are told, that one should understand the great interest in clocks in Europe from the fourteenth century on. Clocks in Italian towns struck twenty-four hours a day. There are several classic passages in the humanists which are frequently cited to illustrate this state of mind: Carraccioli laments the amount of time spent in church in the kingdom of Naples, and, five centuries before Mr. Sinclair Lewis discovered Babbitt, Gianozzo Manetti saw God as the supreme business man; Lorenzo Valla's respect for the reciprocity of contractual obligation was so great that he affirmed it was wrong to serve even God without the expectation of proper remuneration; and Leon Battista Alberti regarded prosperity as a manifestation of God's pleasure in the righteous management of affairs: "a kind of cooperation between grace and personal efficiency was assumed."[8]

[6]Cf. Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild*, 37-9, 99, 111.

[7]Cf. Albert Brackmann, "Der mittelalterliche Ursprung der Nationalstaaten" (*Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philos.-hist. Klasse*, 1936, 133 ff.). One may be forgiven his amusement at Brackmann's reference (132) to "diese normannisch-*nordische* Staatenform" (in speaking of the English monarchy under Henry 1).

[8]Von Martin, *Sociology of the Renaissance*, 17. See also Hans Baron, "A Sociological Interpretation of the Early Renaissance in Florence" (*South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXXVIII, Oct., 1939, 437-8).

Any sociological analysis of Renaissance society must include some consideration of the Church. Recent investigators have emphasized, as one of the larger ironies of history, that the Avignonese papacy was itself, together with the bureaucratic state, the chief solvent of what nostalgic neo-scholastics today regard as the unity and harmonious composition of medieval society.[9] In the fourteenth century the officials of the Apostolic Camera included financiers who sought new and exploited old sources of revenue with an enterprise perhaps unparalleled in the service of any state in contemporary Europe. In an era of rising prices it became ever more costly to meet the spiritual and secular responsibilities of the Church; as the newly organized collectorates made more effective the collection of funds throughout Europe, the Church became a consumer of goods on an enormous scale; prices rose still higher, and the Church found the problem of income one of almost perennial crisis. But the history of the fourteenth-century papacy remains to be written; it is only in the last forty years that any substantial portion of the Avignonese archives has been published. Almost a dozen of the chief French medievalists of our time—G. Mollat, Auguste Coulon, Paul Lecacheux, Eugène Déprez, J.-M. Vidal, Georges Daumet, and others—have made available to us, for the first time, thousands of documents illustrating every aspect of church history in the fourteenth century.[10] A row of huge and handsome volumes now awaits some von Ranke and Pastor to write, from their respective points of view, the history of the papacy in one of its most critical and fascinating periods.

It must not be thought that medieval chivalric ideals had no influence upon the Italian Renaissance. In Italy, unlike northern Europe, the nobility moved into the towns where they became almost assimilated with the high *bourgeoisie*. In Florence, for example, the Ricasoli were a feudal family; the Acciajuoli were *bourgeois*; they became linked by marriage: "As the estates intermixed, so did their outlooks, the military daring of the noble and the economic calculation of the bourgeois."[11] This combination of courage and brains brought great fame and great fortune to Venice, Genoa, and Florence, but the heroic age of early capitalism came gradually to an end in the fifteenth century. With the possession of wealth made in commerce and in industry there came the desire to preserve it; the *bourgeoisie* became conservative; they aped the nobility, and sought alliances with noble families. The fourteenth-century *bourgeoisie* had been republican in sentiment; it had desired, for its own betterment, social and political change; and fourteenth-century humanists like Giovanni Boccaccio and Coluccio Salutati had been the publicists of this *bourgeois* republicanism.[12] But with the fifteenth century came a *bourgeois* distrust of the humanist; the *bourgeois* forgot his earlier interest in ancient republicanism; now, above all, he desired a stable society, feared civil strife, and looked to despot, pope, or monarch to protect him and his possessions. The

[9]Von Martin, *Sociology of the Renaissance*, 78.

[10]*Lettres des papes du XIV^me^ siècle* (Paris, 1900).

[11]Von Martin, *Sociology of the Renaissance*, 48.

[12]One of the last important literati of the Renaissance republican in sympathy was Leonardo Bruni Aretino, whose *Historiarum Florentini populi libri xii*, written in the first half of the fifteenth century, has been recently studied anew by Wallace K. Ferguson, who has noted Bruni's strong affinities with the "Florentine burgher humanism of an earlier generation" (*American Historical Review*, XLV, 1939-40, 8-9).

humanist was only too conscious of his impotence when left to stand alone; he climbed into the ivory tower whence he fulminated against *bourgeois* philistinism. Seeing now small practical purpose in his studies, the humanist made a virtue of cultural irrationalism. He pursued art for the sake of art. But the humanist who could preach republicanism in the fourteenth century could preach absolutism in the fifteenth. The *bourgeois* had become an aristocrat, and the humanist who would enjoy his support must now glorify aristocratic ideals. The humanist made the adjustment, for he much preferred the luxury and security of the court at a despot's country seat to the hardship and independence of the ivory tower, which might be only a garret in town, for if the republican ideals of a Brutus were dying in Florence, the charm and patronage of a Maecenas were very much alive in the nearby villa of Careggi. The affinity we have thus seen between the early capitalist and the feudal noble is not at all strange, for it is always well to bear in mind that capitalist society was and is an aristocratic society, in Renaissance Italy and in later times, almost as aristocratic, in fact, as the clerico-feudal society which it gradually displaced. About the year 1500, with this social feudalization of the high *bourgeoisie,* there came a revival of the chivalric ideals of, say, the year 1250, softened and refined by humanist learning, and at the Italian courts of the late-Quattrocento and the Cinquecento the prince's wife and the great courtesan presided over a little world which had tired of the earlier *bourgeois* values of rationality, utility, and quantity: "chivalry itself had by now become a 'work of art'."[13] Blue blood again comes to possess a mystic power; a new era has dawned for the aristocracy of Italy and of Europe; and it lasts until the new resurgence of the *bourgeoisie* in the eighteenth century.

Such is the sociological history of the Italian Renaissance as sketched for us by Alfred von Martin and his confrères; its chief emphases devolve around the influence of economic forces upon society; its debt to Marxian speculation will be readily perceived; and its simplicity of explanation will not content those who regard the determinant and constitutive forces in society as being many and varied. Franz Borkenau has dealt more especially with the intellectual and philosophic history of late medieval and early modern times (aspects of our subject to which we shall turn shortly); the themes of his work are less easy to summarize in brief compass, but his premises prescind from conclusions of the sort Von Martin has arrived at. There have been many penetrating observations of the growth and character of Renaissance society made in recent studies of the economic history of the period, for especial stress has been laid upon gradual change and gradual development; and it was precisely the factor of development which Burckhardt, in his search for "the recurrent, constant, and typical," pretty much failed to deal with. Burckhardt's failing was a serious one, for even if man's nature changes little, his history changes much.[14]

Before this alliance of the high *bourgeoisie* and the decadent feudality, which is basic to any understanding of the sixteenth century, the high *bourgeois* had, however, exploited the democratic aspirations of their smaller fellows, whose numbers and strength they had employed gradually to reduce and to cripple the political and economic strength of the feudatories. They could, on occasion, make and unmake tyrants after a fashion

[13]Von Martin, *Sociology of the Renaissance,* 73.

[14]Cf. F. Engel-Janosi, *The Growth of German Historicism* (Baltimore, 1944), 74, 76.

that the modern student of Italian history sometimes, perhaps inappropriately, calls "proto-fascist." Let me give a single example of this control of the state and exploitation of the lesser *bourgeois* and the proletariat by the first great capitalists. It comes as early as the fourteenth century, and I would illustrate it from the able researches of Armando Sapori.[15] Following the financial crisis of 1339, caused by the collapse of the credit of Edward III of England and Robert the Wise of Naples and the threatened bankruptcy of the Bardi and the Peruzzi, and the complete failure, by July of 1342, of Florentine designs upon Lucca, banking interests in Florence, both *grandi* and *popolani,* raised the famous Walter of Brienne, titular Duke of Athens, to the Florentine *signoria,* hoping so to guide his domestic and foreign policies that the ruinous expenditures of the preceding decade might be stopped, for neither the bankers nor the public treasury could any longer afford the luxury of costly failure. Capitalist propaganda prepared the way well, if quickly, for Walter of Brienne, and all social classes combined in welcoming the establishment of his lordship over Florence: "The capitalists," declares Sapori, "could not have wished for more."[16] But they did wish for more; they wished Walter to rule in their interests; he wished to rule in his own; and after less than a year the banking circles which had made him lord of Florence conspired against him and expelled him from the city (on July 26, 1343). For the historical sociologist of the Renaissance here is, in actual fact, the "ideal type," who illustrates within himself much of the political and economic pattern of the larger society in which his career is woven.

From a consideration of a few recent views of the social and sociological history of the Italian Renaissance, we may pass, more briefly, to the work of some more specifically economic historians and note, too, the reaction against economic history in Italy. Building upon the brilliant model furnished, a half century ago, by Professor Gaetano Salvemini in his *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295,*[17] and upon the learned works, also in Florentine history, of Robert Davidsohn and Alfred Doren, as well as the valuable studies of Gioacchino Volpe in the economic and social history of Pisa, Italian scholars have produced a vast number of articles and monographs. They have described and analysed the growth of municipal populations; the accumulation of capital in ground rents and commercial enterprise; the relations of the city (*città*) to its dependent countryside (*il contado*); contracts, loans, and partnerships; the growth of the artisan and mercantile classes; the beginnings of industrial capitalism in the fourteenth century; the struggle between urban proletariat and *bourgeois* patriciate; the significance of the growth of credit; and the multiplicity of financial techniques and institutions which were evolved to meet the increasingly complex needs of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. It is true that not infrequently the facts of economic and political history were pressed into the Marxian mould, and the rival interests of *popolo grasso* and *popolo minuto* were depicted, in the throes of the class struggle, with a specious and sometimes sinister modernity. It has been the good fortune of Italian historiography, however, in so far as the later middle ages and the Renaissance are concerned, not to rotate on the axis

[15]See his study of *La Crisi delle compagnie mercantili dei Bardi e dei Peruzzi* (Florence, 1926), 146-54, 177, 185, 205.

[16]*Ibid.*, 148.

[17]Florence, 1899.

of any school of economic thought. There is a marked independence in the interests and work of Italian scholars. The school of economic interpretation established in Germany by Karl Bücher and Werner Sombart stimulated much scholarship and discussion; it also did much harm, and vitiated by gratuitous complications much of the economic history of the medieval and Renaissance periods. Bücher's theory of the successive planes and periods of economic development (*Wirtschaftsstufen*), to the refutation of which Professor Alfons Dopsch has devoted much time and strength, is now but a chapter in the history of economic history, but the name of Werner Sombart, who also laboured under this misconception still looms very large, and his influence upon present understanding of capitalism and its concomitant phenomena in the later middle ages and the Renaissance is thought by some of his critics to be a pernicious one.[18] But regimentation of historical thinking by a dominant school did not come in Italy, and after the first decade of the present century interest in economic history waned somewhat, and Italian historical writing reflected the increasing dissatisfaction with materialism and with egocentric positivism. Benedetto Croce was the apostle of a new idealism. A potent nationalism gradually turned the attention of many young Italian scholars from medieval and Renaissance history to the more inspiring and patriotic pursuit of writing the history and hopes of the Risorgimento, for here the historian's stethescope marked the heart-beat of a new Italy, risen phoenix-like from the ashes of a great past, and to a pride in this historical greatness of Italy was to be added a proper confidence in her future. Fewer local histories were now written, and scholars studied the broader aspects of Italian national culture.

Further notices of books and articles on the economic history of this period may be found in an article by Professor F. L. Nussbaum,[19] although he gives, unfortunately, almost no attention to Italy. An abundance of material on our subject may be found in a learned article by Professor Gino Luzzatto, on the "Study of Medieval Economic History in Italy,"[20] in which the Renaissance also receives attention. Nussbaum sounds, however, a wise note of caution with which we may close this section of our survey: "Forty years ago we were still involved in the attempt to establish an 'economic interpretation of history.' Since then our faith both in interpretations and in economics has waned. . . ."[21] We may consider a single example of the difficulties encountered in such interpretations in Renaissance history.

Some of the effects of this *bourgeois,* so-called capitalist, spirit, most often thought to arise from the economic transformation of society during this period, are glibly described as individualism, secularism, utilitarianism, materialism, and the like. These terms are all easily understandable until you make the mistake of trying to understand them. Individualism is often regarded as one of the prime characteristics of Renaissance society and the origin of several other Renaissance and modern "isms." In a learned and provocative article, however, on individualism in the Renaissance, Professor

[18]Cf. M. Postan, "Medieval Capitalism" (*Economic History Review*, IV, 1932-4, 212-27).

[19]"Economic History of Renaissance Europe" (*Journal of Modern History,* XIII, 1941, 527-45).

[20]*Journal of Economic and Business History,* IV, 1932, 708-27.

[21]*Journal of Modern History,* XIII, 1941, 528.

Norman Nelson has shown that the term means so much or so little that many scholars have contrived, for many years, to discuss very different phenomena under the word individualism: to Jakob Burckhardt individualism, born of the Italian political scene in the late thirteenth century, was the soul and source of the new humanist culture; but Giuseppe Toffanin interprets humanism as being absolutely opposed to individualism which he associates with the medieval commune, ever anxious to cast off the restraints of political and moral authorities external to themselves; while some scholars, like J. Huizinga, have quite properly affirmed that the term is hopelessly ambiguous without a very specialized definition, and that both the middle ages and the Renaissance are far from possessing the kind of cultural homogeneity and unity which might permit of analysis with any single concept as a measuring-rod. Into the confused logomachy of what scholars have declared and denied individualism to be, I shall not go: it must suffice to refer to Professor Nelson's article on "Individualism as a Criterion of the Renaissance."[22] Here the reader will find some suggested distinctions and definitions which help a bit to dispel the clouds of dust which have gathered over the battlefield of Renaissance scholarship in two generations of sometimes acrimonious dispute on this subject. Professor Roland H. Bainton, however, while trying to steer clear of too vague concepts, has described some of the religious and intellectual aspects of the transition from late medieval to early modern times in a bibliographical article called "Changing Ideas and Ideals in the Sixteenth Century."[23] Bainton's comments on the numerous works he cites are noteworthy, and his picture of the passage of Europe from Renaissance to Reformation is an instructive one.

Reference has already been made in this paper to Croce and to the effect of the new idealism upon some Italian historians. Also in the idealist tradition have been the anti-scholastic and modernist studies of the late Professor Giovanni Gentile and his followers, whose critical works on some of the chief Renaissance philosophers have been very stimulating although they have tended to put modern questions to Renaissance sources and projected contemporary ideas and problems into a rather remote past, which is probably not the proper way to reconstruct the intellectual life of Italy—or of any country—in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. To Gentile the Renaissance represents, in any event, a distinct break from the medieval period; Renaissance man felt the creative force of his own thought, felt himself of godlike power and capacity, and proceeded therewith to reconstruct the world after his own fashion. It was the craving to do this and the consciousness of the great strength necessary which became the special characteristics of the Renaissance, and which distinguish it, in Gentile's opinion, from the middle ages: hence comes "the dawn of the modern world."[24] For Gentile the chief representatives of this spirit are Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, and in the thought of Marsilio, Giuseppe Saitta, a student of Gentile, has traced the final apotheosis of man.[25]

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[22]*Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* XXXII, 1933, 316-34.

[23]*Journal of Modern History,* VIII, 1936, 417-43.

[24]Giovanni Gentile, "La Concezione umanistica nel mondo" (*Nuova Antologia,* LXVI, 1931, 315).

[25]*La Filosofia di Marsilio Ficino* (Messina, 1923).

Such self-confident idealism stands, however, in strong contrast to the scholastic spiritualism of Francesco Olgiati,[26] to whom the underlying spirit of humanism and the Renaissance movement remained the solid core of Catholic Christianity, *il Rinascimento cristiano,*[27] and in his learned and thoughtful studies Giuseppe Toffanin has emphasized that Latin was the language and the culture of Lactantius, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine no less than of Cicero; that humanism was very strictly in the patristic tradition; and that the antiquity and universality of the Catholic Church were those of the ancient Roman culture so beloved of the humanists.[28] Humanism becomes thus but a chapter in the history of the Church. Renaissance humanism, we now perceive, is not based in any so-called individualism; individualism we should think of as springing from the great heretical movements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; individualism is, in fact, medieval, and humanism is opposed to it! In Meister Eckhardt and his followers, in John Wyclif, and in the sixteenth-century Reformers, Toffanin sees an "anti-Roman current."[29] The beginnings of modern philosophic liberalism, which suggest the names of Averroes, Ockham, Nicholas of Cusa, and Pietro Pomponazzi are very improperly regarded as any part of humanism: they are anti-humanist and largely non-Italian in origin and spirit.[30] Humanist philosophy deals with the same problems as theology.[31] For Toffanin the central theme of the Italian Renaissance, like the thesis of his book, is the co-eternal character of Catholicism and Latin culture: "la religione nostra è eterna e tale sarà la letteratura latina."[32] To Vittorio Rossi, however, the Renaissance was neither pagan nor Christian; it was an intellectual assimilation of, and a spiritual victory over, both of them; it produced "a new balance of thought, modern thought."[33]

Professor Johan Nordström has given us an interesting essay on *Moyen-âge et Renaissance* which emphasizes the medieval French origins and background of the Italian Renaissance: Nordström insists that France displayed, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, virtually all the characteristics—economic and social, scientific and philosophical, literary and aristic—commonly regarded as first appearing in the Italian Trecento and Quattrocento.[34] His thesis of the French and medieval north-Alpine origins of the Renaissance, however, has been violently, indeed vituperatively, challenged by Italo Siciliano, who castigates Nordström's alleged

[26]Olgiati has discussed the philosophical implications of his position, with special reference to Armando Carlini, Croce, and Gentile, in an article on "Idealismus u. Spiritualismus" (*Italienische Kulturberichte*, I, 1934, 121-39).

[27]See his *L'Anima dell' umanesimo e del Rinascimento* (Milan, 1924).

[28]Giuseppe Toffanin, *Che cosa fu l'umanesimo* (Florence, 1928); *Il Cinquecento* (Milan, 1929); and *Storia dell' umanesimo (dal XIII al XVI secolo)* (Naples, 1933). For some of Toffanin's chief emphases, see the *Storia dell' umanesimo,* 77-80 ff., 110 ff., 170, 190-1, 269 ff., and 314-16.

[29]*Storia dell' umanesimo,* 277-81.

[30]*Ibid.,* 270-1.

[31]Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927), 4: "Die Philosophie des Quattrocento ist und bleibt, gerade in ihren bedeutendsten und folgereichsten Leistungen, wesentlich Theologie. Ihr gesamter Gehalt drängt sich in die drei grossen Probleme: Gott, Freiheit, Unsterblichkeit zusammen."

[32]*Storia dell' umanesimo,* 164.

[33]"Il Rinascimento" (*Nuova Antologia,* LXIV, 1929, 137-50) and *Il Quattrocento* (Milan, 1933).

[34]J. Nordström, *Moyen-âge et renaissance* (Paris, 1933), chap. II, IV-VIII, and especially IX.

ignorance and deficiencies with a lack of caution and objectivity which seem to me rather to exceed the failings he laments in Nordström.[35] Siciliano defends and seeks to illustrate the indigenous growth of the Italian Renaissance; he overstresses what he regards as the futile character of much twelfth-century classicism; and ends by reaffirming traditional views of "middle ages and Renaissance."[36] Although he has not done justice to Nordström and the point of view the latter represents, Siciliano's book is lively and sometimes convincing.

That much of this controversy and disagreement derives from a failure of satisfactory definition to begin with, is very obvious; it has been very obvious to the scholars concerned; but extended study of their sources has, apparently, forced upon them very different views of the relative weight to be given to the various and multiple elements they find in Renaissance culture. It is not, then, a lack of definition we suffer from; for we have had, in recent years, altogether too many definitions of the Renaissance; but, unfortunately, scholars have not yet established for us a universally acceptable definition of the Renaissance. This is inevitable as long as they are unable to reduce the huge diversity of materials with which they deal to patterns in the essential delineaments of which they are able to concur. However, for an outline of the Italian and German controversies of the nineteen-thirties on the character, meaning, and importance of the Renaissance in Italy, reference may be made to the valuable study, to which I owe much, of Professor August Buck, on "Das Problem der italienischen Renaissance in der neuesten Forschung."[37] I shall content myself with this reference to Buck, and not deal further with the books and articles which he has considered, for it is not desirable that I should give here very much of what is easily available elsewhere.[38] But no reader of Buck's study

[35]I. Siciliano, *Medio Evo e Rinascimento* (Biblioteca della "Rassegna," XIX, 1936), 35-50.

[36]*Ibid.*, 51 ff., 77 ff., 109 ff.

[37]In the *Italienische Kulturberichte* (Leipziger Romanistiche Studien, III. Reihe, 1937), II, 179-213.

[38]There has been much controversy and some polemic on various aspects of "the Renaissance concept" (*der Renaissancebegriff*). The most important articles are: J. Huizinga, "Das Problem der Renaissance" (*Italien*, I, 1927-8), and in Huizinga's *Wege der Kulturgeschichte* (Munich, 1930), 89-139; M. J. Wolff, "Richtlinien der Renaissance bewegung" (*German.-Roman. Monatsschrift*, XX, 1932, 293-302); H. W. Eppelsheimer, "Das Renaissance-Problem" (*Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, XI, 1933, 477-500); G. Weise, "Der doppelte Begriff der Renaissance" (*ibid.*, XI, 1933, 501-29); Carl Neumann, "Ende des Mittelalters? Die Legende der Ablösung des Mittelalters durch die Renaissance" (*ibid.*, XII, 1934, 124-71); R. Stadelmann, "Zum Problem der Renaissance" (*Neue Jahrbücher f. Wissenschaft u. Jugendbildung*, X, 1934, 49-63); and the well-known article by Konrad Burdach, "Die seelischen u. geistigen Quellen der Renaissance bewegung" (*Historische Zeitschrift*, CXLIX, 1934, 477-521); and Arminio Janner, "Individualismus u. Religiosität in der Renaissance" (*Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, XIII, 1935, 357-77).

Eppelsheimer, the able biographer of Petrarch, defends the essential soundness of Burckhardt's position against Konrad Burdach's stress upon the mystico-spiritual, religious, and medieval-Christian development and character of the Renaissance movement. Janner also defends Burckhardt. Burdach's followers have sadly diminished in numbers in the last fifteen years or so. Delio Cantimori, "Sulla storia del concetto di Rinascimento" (*Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, 2nd ser., I, 1932, 229-68), discusses the history of the Renaissance concept from Cola di Rienzi and Machiavelli to Hegel, Burckhardt, and De Sanctis. Professor E. F. Jacob has summarized some of the work done in the nineteen-twenties, especially in Germany and Britain, in a paper on "The Fifteenth Century: Some Recent Interpretations" (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, XIV, July, 1930).

can fail to hear what he does not say: that Renaissance scholarship of the past generation has suffered severely from the bane of originality.

No generation has beheld in equal measure with our own the conquest of nature by the scientist. It is not surprising that the history of science should have become a subject of increased interest. Obviously, too, since the Renaissance has been hailed so much as the germinal period of our own culture, the historian of science was bound to investigate the extent of scientific innovation to be discerned and the significance of the intellectual "mutations," so-called, thereby induced in this much disputed period. Although some historians, most notably Professor Lynn Thorndike, have studied for its own sake the history of science from Ptolemy to Copernicus and Galileo, the mainspring of modern science is the elusive mechanism whose operation most recent historians have sought to understand. If this mainspring be a proper scientific method, the Renaissance conceived in terms of humanism at least has had nothing to do with modern science, according to an important article by Professor John Herman Randall, Jr., on "The Development of Scientific Method in the School of Padua."[39] Randall says flatly that many humanists, in the field of science, "seem to have displayed all the customary ignorance and futility of intellectual revolutionaries, and to have proposed new methods distinguished chiefly by the novelty of their ignorance."[40] He cautions us against the uncritical acceptance of the importance which "pioneer thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century made of their own turning away from the heritage of the past,"[41] and emphasizes that the preceding later middle ages contain the roots of seventeenth-century scientific advance, with "countless bonds of continuity in materials, methods, and even achievements." With ample and effective demonstration of his thesis, Randall affirms that the theory and method of modern science grew with the constant reappraisal and reconstruction of the fundamental concepts of the Aristotelian tradition, and strictly within that tradition in the two great scientific schools of the later middle ages and early modern times, the fourteenth-century Ockhamites in Oxford and Paris and the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Averroists in Padua.[42] To add to their final achievement of "a logic of investigation and inquiry,"[43] there came, with the seventeenth century, the insistence upon the mathematical structure of nature, "that the principles of natural science be mathematical," and here too the dominant tradition in the advance of modern science was Aristotelian, according to Randall, and was little furthered by Renaissance Platonism, to which he believes too much importance is sometimes attached.[44] Instead of the medieval Aristotle lying like an incubus upon the growth of a truly scientific spirit, Randall concludes that "the father of modern science turns out to be none other than the Master of them that know."[45] This is by and large the conclusion to which Professor Lynn Thorndike has come in some forty years of study and research, although he has concerned himself more with the substance than the form of scientific investigation, necessarily so, since he has wished

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[39] *Journal of the History of Ideas*, I, 1940, 177-206.
[40] *Ibid.*, 178.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*, 180.
[43] *Ibid.*, 201.
[44] *Ibid.*, 204-5, 182-3.
[45] *Ibid.*, 203.

to make available to his readers the contents of the vast sources he has explored.[46] He seeks, where possible, to let the sources speak for themselves.

It is customary to describe Thorndike's work as massive or magistral or monumental; however true such epithets are, they are hardly instructive; but, then, it is not easy to reduce the life's work of a great scholar to a few convenient *clichés*. There is, fortunately, no need to attempt here any succinct appraisal of Thorndike's work—were I competent to do so—for Professor Dana B. Durand has summarized for us, with some success, Thorndike's place in the historiography of medieval and early modern science.[47] Thorndike's disdain of the Renaissance is famous; indeed, it is almost notorious. In general one may say of Thorndike's volumes that they seek to illustrate the greatness of fourteenth-century science, and confirm in this respect the general contention of the late Professor Pierre Duhem, while they tend to depreciate the more illustrious reputation of the sixteenth century. Thus Richard Suiseth (Swineshead), Jacopo and Giovanni de' Dondi (dall' Orologio), John de Murs, Nicholas Oresme, and Henry of Hesse are, for examples, extolled as great scientific figures in the fourteenth century (vol. III), while certain revered names like Leonardo da Vinci, Copernicus, Vesalius, and others are subjected to a deflationary and often very effective criticism (vol. V). "These giants, whom our schoolbooks have taught us to venerate as founders of modern science, emerge from the pages of *Magic and Experimental Science* with a notable diminution of stature."[48] Thorndike has explored the ubiquitous relationships, as he has seen them, between magic and science in the later middle ages and "the period," as he calls it, "formerly known as 'the Renaissance'"; he has shown that not infrequently a basic and positive contribution to modern science has arisen from the pursuit of magical practice and experiment; and that even the greatest scientists were never "ahead of their times," that they stood upon the shoulders of their predecessors, and had their full share of concern, almost invariably, with alchemy, astrology, geomancy, and other occult interests: even Leonardo da Vinci is regarded, as a challenge to those who have so much extolled his universal genius, as "the magician of the Renaissance" (vol. V, chap. II). The task of exploring the changing social milieus in which modern science has grown, the relations between "science and society," "technics and civilization," and the like, Thorndike has, for the most part, left to others, believing that it is first necessary to know what science was in a given era before it can be related to contemporary political, social, and economic conditions.

Some historical sociologists have alleged that the spirit of calculation, the conduct of business enterprise with precise determination of profit and loss, led to the mathematical and statistical analysis of nature, and that studies in the natural sciences were quickened by the needs of the new industries, a theme emphasized by Franz Borkenau, whose book, already

[46]See his *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, 1934-41), III-VI. The first two volumes, published in 1923 (and reprinted in 1929), cover the period from the Roman Empire to the end of the thirteenth century. Of outstanding value, too, in any bibliography of Renaissance science, is Lynn Thorndike's *Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century* (New York, 1929).

[47]"Magic and Experimental Science: The Achievement of Lynn Thorndike" (*Isis*, XXXIII, 1942, 691-712).

[48]*Ibid.*, 704.

several times referred to, forms a bridge over which one may pass from the social to the scientific history of medieval and early modern Europe. The same theme is emphasized by Von Martin and others, and is the subject of a recent paper by Edgar Zilsel, on the "Sociological Roots of Science."[49] Although Mr. Zilsel's account is admittedly sketchy (and there is some doubt in his mind as to what sociology consists in), his general contention is that modern science awaited the union, which came about 1600, of the rationalism and capacity for abstract thinking of academically trained persons with the practical interests and mechanical skills of artisans, mariners, and so on.[50] From this alliance of intellectual training and practical experience, we are told, there came with William Gilbert (d. 1603) and Galileo (d. 1642), a new age of technology, and further advances in metallurgy and engineering, cartography and navigation, gunnery and fortifications, shipbuilding, and the like, which arose to meet the needs of the new commercial and industrial society and the new centralized national states of Europe.[51]

A summary of current views on Renaissance science is much facilitated by the fact that a recent number of the *Journal of the History of Ideas,*[52] has been largely given over to a symposium on the place and importance of science in the Renaissance period. The chief articles in this group are by Professors Dana B. Durand and Hans Baron; Durand tends towards a rather low evaluation of the scientific contributions of the Renaissance; while Baron, as in previous publications, takes a pro-Renaissance position. Durand has concluded, as a result of his critical analysis of the relative value of old and new elements in the history of science in fifteenth-century Italy, that "the balance of tradition and innovation in fifteenth-century Italy was not so decisively favorable as to distinguish that century radically from those that preceded it, nor to constitute the Quattrocento a unique and unrivalled moment in the history of western thought."[53] Science is a hard-headed subject, and some of its historians have been hard-headed too. They have tended to distrust any reference to an intangible spirit, a *Zeitgeist,* which does not lend itself easily to objective appraisal, but which is said to inform the thought and action of an age. Historians of the Renaissance period, in science as well as in other aspects of its culture, have been clashing upon the basic issue of whether there is any such thing as a really significant Renaissance spirit; whether, in fact, the concept of a *Zeitgeist* is not likely to beg any historical question put to the sources. Professor Hans Baron has stood out, however, in defence of the older view of a Renaissance spirit; in the present article he seeks, with aid from the works of Ernst Cassirer,

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[49]*American Journal of Sociology,* XLVII, 1941-2, 544-62.

[50]*Ibid.,* 548, 553-5.

[51]It is disappointing to find Zilsel subscribing to the antiquated notion that the cheapness of slave labour makes the "introduction of machines superfluous" (*American Journal of Sociology,* XLVII, 559). The historians of ancient slavery have shown that slave labour was extremely uncheap, and whatever the explanations we give of the mysterious failure of the Graeco-Roman world to construct machines for industrial production, slavery should not figure very prominently among them.

[52]Vol. IV, Jan., 1943, 1-74.

[53]Dana B. Durand, "Tradition and Innovation in Fifteenth-Century Italy: 'Il Primato dell' Italia' in the Field of Science" (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* IV, 1943, 20). In a somewhat similar survey of "the intellectual interests reflected in libraries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries," Miss Pearl Kibre has rendered a similar verdict (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* VII, 1946, 297).

Leonardo Olschki, and others, to demonstrate the importance of the Renaissance *Zeitgeist* in the forward march of science.[54] He believes that the critical subjective humanistic spirit of the fifteenth century, since it detached itself, according to him, from the otherworldliness and self-debasement of the middle ages, was the indispensable prelude to the objective scientific performance of the great sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The passage is thus from some understanding of human nature to nature, Baron affirms, from man to the natural world in which he lives, and which he is most anxious to understand, for it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the self from which his speculation and his observation had begun. We deal here with intangible forces, but we should deal with them sympathetically, for to dismiss them would leave us vulnerable to the suggestion that things you cannot touch are not important.

In describing the relationship between Renaissance society and science Baron also stresses the "symbiosis" of academic theory and practical experience for the solution of problems which were arising in the new capitalist industries. Here, if we may so observe as an aside, the Renaissance concept, strictly interpreted as a rebirth of the rational spirit of antiquity, is particularly misleading, for the technological incapacity of the Graeco-Roman world, however baffling and difficult to explain, is an historical commonplace; and these new techniques which arose with the new industries have their background, like the class that brought them into being, in the rise of towns in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is widely agreed, but not mentioned in this connection by Zilsel or Baron, that the mechanical clock, an invention of the later thirteenth century, is the source from which springs, ultimately, the precision instruments and the mechanics of modern civilization.[55]

It is not possible to appraise the science of the fifteenth century without comparing and contrasting its achievements with those of the fourteenth century. Such a comparison, as Durand notes, is not favourable to the fifteenth century. In this connection the great Pierre Duhem has emphasized the originality and importance of French scientific scholarship, centred in fourteenth-century Paris, and maintained that the work of Galileo, when viewed in the light—or the dim shadows—of his predecessors, rather resembles a milestone than a great landmark in the history of science. The theory of the diurnal rotation of the earth, a highly significant emendation of the Ptolemaic cosmology, first appeared at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the University of Paris, and in Nicholas Oresme, who defended the theory later in the century, Duhem saw "a French precursor of Copernicus." Ptolemaic astronomy, however, was not herewith very much modified; the geocentric system remained by and large unchallenged; and what effect such speculations had on Copernicus it is not yet, apparently, possible to state with any confidence.[56] In the realm of physics,

[54]Hans Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* IV, 1943, 21-49).

[55]The first-known description of a mechanical clock appears in a Basel MS (F. IV. 18) of Robertus Anglicus's commentary on the *Sphere* of Sacrobosco (described by Lynn Thorndike, "Invention of the Mechanical Clock about 1271 A.D." *Speculum,* XVI, 1941, 242-3); the best known of the early clock-makers are the Paduans Jacopo and Giovanni de' Dondi "dall' Orologio," father and son, in the fourteenth century (on whom see Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science,* III, 386-92).

[56]Durand, "Tradition and Innovation in Fifteenth-Century Italy" (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* IV, 6, 11).

too, Pierre Duhem staked out a large claim for his compatriots, and "undertook to show that the modern era of physics began with the fourteenth-century Paris scholastics, especially Buridan and Oresme, who carried out a fundamental critical revision of the peripatetic theory of motion, establishing in its stead the so-called theory of *impetus*. . . . If Duhem is right, the essential steps in preparing the way for Galileo were taken first in fourteenth-century Paris, and later in sixteenth-century Italy by followers of the Paris tradition, the Quattrocento contributing nothing of importance to this process."[57]

In support of his view that the humanist emphasis upon humane and mundane values—man is a proper study for man—was beneficial to scientific progress, Hans Baron singles out, as two important aspects of his argument, the humanist assault upon astrology and upon the medieval cosmology and its implications. He mentions the attacks upon astrology, on literary and semi-philosophic grounds by Petrarch at the beginning of the Renaissance,[58] and much more importantly by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola towards the end of the fifteenth century. Throughout the whole period with which we are concerned science was seriously impeded if not dominated by the pseudo-science of astrology, which invaded the fields of medicine, law, and politics, but the subordination of man to the external influence and control of planetary conjunctions seemed to rob him of free will and creative capacities of his own. Either the independent worth of the human personality had to go, it is alleged, or the "scientific" attachment to astrology had to go. Faced with these alternatives, certain humanists abandoned astrology in opposition to its contemporary support by scientists. It seems unworthwhile to argue, in this context at any rate, the scientific character and the valuable by-products of astrology—its influence was surely more pernicious than constructive in the history of science—and so the humanist who disregarded science can, in this instance it would appear, be thought of as advancing the cause of modern science further than the contemporary scientist who disregarded humanism. This position is succinctly stated by Professor Ernst Cassirer: "The real motive for the liberation from astrology was not the new concept of nature, but the new concept of the intrinsic dignity of man."[59] Baron's conclusion to be drawn herefrom is now easily apprehended, and we can appreciate the force of his near paradox that the humanistic, non-scientific Quattrocento "may have produced such philosophic views and intellectual habits as on the one hand could foreshadow characteristics of the later 'scientific mind' and on the other in due time react on science itself."[60]

[57]*Ibid.*, 17. On the medieval impetus theory, however, and its relation to the Newtonian inertial concept, see Marshall Clagett, *Giovanni Marliani and Late Medieval Physics* (New York, 1941), 125-6 n., and works there cited. On Nicholas Oresme, see A. D. Menut and A. J. Denomy, in *Medieval Studies* (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1943), V, 239 ff.

[58]See, *infra*, n. 92.

[59]Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos* (Leipzig, Berlin, 1927), 125 ff., quoted by Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV, 1943, 29): "Nicht die neue Anschauung der Natur, sondern die neue Anschauung vom Selbstwert des Menschen war das eigentliche Motiv der Befreiung" (Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, 126). (But there is here, of course, a long Christian opposition to astrology, on doctrinal grounds, that should not be overlooked.)

[60]Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV, 1943, 31).

In the sixteenth century the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic-Christian cosmology of the middle ages was dealt the same kind of a blow as, but more severe than, the cosmology of the Old Testament (and the New Testament) received when learned Christians in the later second century sought to reconcile biblical passages with the astronomical and cosmological data furnished them by Claudius Ptolemaeus.[61] The antecedents of sixteenth-century cosmological speculation, however, Cassirer, Baron, and others find in the thought of the fifteenth century, and here they regard the work of Nicholas of Cusa as marking a fundamental advance upon the medieval past.[62]

The static world of medieval thought, cast in the finite universe of Aristotle and Ptolemy and of those scholastic theologians who rejected the possibility of a plurality of worlds, was enclosed and limited by Ptolemy's concentric crystalline spheres, and from the earth as the centrum man looked out upon the divine panorama of fixed stars and planets. Man lived on a vile and corrupt earth, placed in the centre of the universe, and so far removed from the stars which were uncorrupt and incorruptible. Since the dregs and scum sank into the centre of the world, hell was situated there: "in the spatial sense the medieval world was literally diabolocentric."[63] A new element is said to enter into man's thinking, however, into his attitude towards both the universe and himself, when Nicholas of Cusa, albeit more mystic than astronomer, rescued the earth and man who dwelt upon it from this devastating contempt by his confident declaration that the earth was identical in nature with the noble stars, was itself a "noble star."[64] Cassirer, Baron, and others have found in such an idea of Nicholas of Cusa a manifestation of the new spirit, the background of the new science, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proves to be the solvent of the whole cosmology of the middle ages. The heliostatic theory of Copernicus has decentralized the whole system (and an acentric concept will follow); Galileo can rejoice in demonstrable proofs that the earth and the stars have common physical bases; and in the pantheism of Giordano Bruno a divine spirit can permeate an infinite universe.[65] But the spirit of this so-called martyr to science is more mystical than

[61]F. C. Burkitt, "Pagan Philosophy and the Christian Church" (*Cambridge Ancient History,* XII, 1939, chap. XIII, 467 ff.).

[62]Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos,* chap. I-II.

[63]A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), 101-2.

[64]Cf. Durand, "Tradition and Innovation in Fifteenth-Century Italy" (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* IV, 12); Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance" (*ibid.,* IV, 1943, 33-5). Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia,* (Leipzig, 1932), II, 12: "tunc non est verum, quod terra ista sit vilissima et infima. . . . Est igitur terra *stella nobilis,* quae lumen et calorem et influentiam habet aliam et diversam ab omnibus aliis stellis. . . . Ita quidem Deus benedictus omnia creavit. . . ." See Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos,* 26 ff. (Cusanus's text cited on 28, n. 2), and cf. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* 104. Some of Nicholas of Cusa's statements made a notable impression upon seventeenth-century writers, but they were merely meant to be illustrative of his preachment *de docta ignorantia*; he dealt in antinomies which became, by all too constructive interpretation, scientific prophecies. Nicholas of Cusa did not, however, propound the theory of a decentralized universe, as Bruno asserted, "under his breath": he was anxious to point the difficulty of using such terms as "centre" and "circumference" in seeking to describe the universe. He does not appear to have abandoned the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic conception of the universe in any signal fashion (Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* 113-14). See also Lynn Thorndike, *Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century* (1929), 133-41.

[65]Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* IV, 1943, 35-6).

mathematical, and "Bruno died," says R. H. Bainton, "for a Copernicus whom he did not understand."[66] Professor Lovejoy has also emphasized that Bruno "was not led to his characteristic convictions by reflection upon the implications of the Copernican theory or by any astronomical observations."[67] Bruno operated closely within the tradition of medieval theology and Platonistic metaphysics; and if he seemed to shatter medieval views of the universe, he was but pushing to a more logical conclusion than St. Thomas was willing to accept, certain implications inherent in "the intrinsically contradictory nature of the general medieval conception of God."[68]

The concept of a static universe, established by God's will in the creation, centred in the earth upon which man played his part in the divine drama of salvation is thus broken down, and a new concept of a decentralized universe emerges, which rescues man and his world from the quality of their especial vileness (*vilissimum et infimum*), but none the less reduces him in its more obvious implications to insignificance in a scheme of things no longer centred in a world which he has regarded as primarily designed as the scene whereon he may work out his all-important destiny. I say primarily, because not even St. Thomas seems to have regarded the universe as existing solely as an instrument of human salvation.[69] In any event, however now the mind and will of God may be the ultimate cause of the character and the appearance of the world, the proximate causes thereof have become such natural phenomena as cold and heat, oceans and earthquakes, storms, winds, and the like, which lend themselves to scientific investigation. Man's theological roots have been torn and twisted. From a static universe we are approaching the concept of one which is dynamic and evolutionary. Everywhere is everything in flux, subject to life and death, growth and decay, and Leonardo could observe "the change of species in flora and fauna in the course of geological history."[70] But in this concept of change, in which all things flow like the river of Heraclitus, the universe is not only decentralized, it is also, in a sense, depersonalized, and a fertile field is supplied for panpsychism and pantheism, and the metaphysical bases of Christian speculation have received no inconsiderable blow. This is, I take it, one of the most important results of the science and philosophy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But perhaps the medieval influence is deep within all this, for in distinguishing between ultimate divine causation and the proximate natural causes of things in the phenomenal world, what have we but the Averroist doctrine of a twofold truth, which, having acknowledged the valid position of revealed theology, can thereafter pursue the study of natural philosophy without further reference to God and revelation?[71]

[66]*Journal of Modern History*, VIII, 440; cf. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, 197-99. In the concept of the plurality of worlds, which gained increasing acceptance among the schoolmen from the later thirteenth century on, can be traced, with some continuity, the origins of Giordano Bruno's theory of an infinite universe (see Durand, "Tradition and Innovation in Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV. 12, and works there cited). The important questions were whether these worlds were inhabited by rational beings, whether the latter required salvation, whether Christ had become Incarnate for them, etc.

[67]*The Great Chain of Being*, 116.

[68]*Ibid.*, 116-21.

[69]*Ibid.*, 77.

[70]Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV, 1943, 46).

[71]Cf. Johan Nordström, *Moyen-âge et Renaissance* (Paris, 1933), 93-9.

The studies of Durand and Baron called forth comments from other scholars, which we have no room here to consider, as part of the Renaissance symposium conducted by the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.[72] From these comments, however, I should like to note Professor Ernst Cassirer's on the "lack of clarity as to the problem and the method of investigation in the history of ideas."[73] The problem of the historian, he warns us, is not to prove the mere existence, in the history of science, of a considerable body of mathematical lore in a given era. The problem is to investigate the use to which this knowledge is put and the consequences that emerge therefrom. The method of the historian of science, he indicates, should not be one of extensive description, but of analysis and of comparison. Does a knowledge of mathematics, for example, provoke the curiosity of a middle age with some interest in natural philosophy or does it transform the very culture of a modern age convinced that "mathematics is not one field of knowledge, but the only valid criterion of knowledge."[74] Cassirer warns us of the futility of trying to draw a dividing line in time between the middle ages and the Renaissance, but he insists that "the character of every culture rests on the equilibrium between the forces that give it form."[75] He believes that from the fifteenth century on the balance between certain juxtaposed forces shifts slowly but steadily: the Church comes to exert less powerful sanctions than the State; theology and revealed truth give way before philosophy and natural science. The historian of ideas should not be content to prove the detached existence of ideas in a given period, but with the extent to which these ideas condition the minds of men and are basic to the culture of the period. He thus demands of the historian of ideas effective synthesis and frank evaluation. The cry for historical synthesis has long been an ardent one among medievalists and Renaissance scholars: "an hour of synthesis," said the late Professor Antoni Rubió i Lluch of Barcelona, "for a lifetime of analysis!" But in the history of medieval and Renaissance science has enough work yet been done to make possible syntheses in which we may put much confidence?

A bibliographical survey of work on the history of medieval and Renaissance science, up to a half dozen years ago, is contained in an article by Francis R. Johnson and Sanford V. Larkey.[76] They point out the need for further investigation in botany during the Renaissance period, more general studies of anatomy and physiology, and of the technical arts and inventions (mining and metallurgy, shipbuilding, and navigation, etc.). The history of mathematics has perhaps been the best handled, and Renaissance medicine has received much attention. Astronomy has also fared well: Galileo and Tycho Brahe are well provided for although research has lagged somewhat in the cases of Kepler and even Copernicus. Johnson and Larkey insist—with reference to the question we have just asked—that studies in Renaissance science are still in a fact-finding stage, and that the time has not yet come for trustworthy syntheses. Quite properly they call for the demonstration and recognition, which they hope further work will bring, of "the continuity of science [from the middle ages to the Renaissance to modern times] and the correlation of its history with the social, political,

[72]Vol. IV, 1943, 49-74.
[73]*Ibid.*, 49-50.
[74]*Ibid.*, 51.
[75]*Ibid.*, 55.
[76][Renaissance] Science" (*Modern Language Quarterly*, II, 1941, 363-401).

religious, and literary history of mankind." Their hopes are high, but all serious students of the Renaissance will share them.[77]

Few scholars would today stand by the view that the Renaissance was based, in its most significant aspects, upon an actual rebirth of ancient Graeco-Roman culture; the name Renaissance has always been more than a bit difficult; and unfortunately there is more than a mere name at stake here, for the concept of revival which inheres in the name is bound, if the concept is unsound, to vitiate much of our thinking and writing on the Renaissance. In seeking to evaluate this concept pertinent questions have often been addressed to the humanists themselves. Professor W. K. Ferguson has described some "Humanist Views of the Renaissance."[78] He reminds us that, among the fifteenth-century humanists themselves, "the metaphor of rebirth in the literal sense of the word is rare."[79] "The Italian humanists thought of the civilization of their own day as a new and original creation, in many respects like that of antiquity but distinctly their own. It was, in all its aspects, the work of the Italian cities and their men of genius."[80] Medievalists of the last generation have tended, of course, to question how new and how original this creation was. But the Renaissance concept is by and large a modern one; much use was made of it by liberal and anti-clerical historians in the nineteenth century. The propriety of its continued use has been maintained by seeking to establish for it a new content largely discovered or constructed in the last three decades or so. The concept of Renaissance, however, has not evolved naturally from the scholarly research of most of its recent defenders; they have begun, rather, with the emotional necessity of defending it; they have been to some extent exegetes of a history revealed in the bible of Jakob Burckhardt. Renaissance apologists have produced a bulky literature in the last two or three decades.[81] The historian of art has reacted most strongly, perhaps, against any considerable revision of our views concerning Renaissance culture. It is obvious that the nature of the materials with which he works should give him a deep respect for the more traditional evaluations of ancient influence upon the so-called Renaissance.

One of the best known recent apologists of the Renaissance concept is Professor Erwin Panofsky, a distinguished historian of art, whose views are set forth in an article on "Renaissance and Renascences."[82] But even the art historian has, under assault, qualified the traditional views of

[77] *Ibid.*, 374-6, 400, 401.

[78] *American Historical Review,* XLV, 1939, 1-28.

[79] *Ibid.*, 18.

[80] *Ibid.*, 28. Cf. Herbert Weisinger, in the *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters,* XXX, 1944, 625-38, and in *Speculum,* XX, 1945, 461).

[81] The Italian literature on the Renaissance, mostly in defence of the concept, is very large. Reference may be made to the following: Giovanni Gentile, "Intorno al concetto dell' umanesimo" (*Giornale Dantesco,* XXXVIII, n. s. VIII, 1937); Franco Simone, "La coscienza della Rinascita negli umanisti" (*La Rinascita,* II, 1939); (*ibid.,* III, 1940); Margherita di Giovanni, "La coscienza della Rinascita negli umanisti" (*ibid.,* III, 1940); Ardengo Soffici, "L'essenza del Rinascimento" (*ibid.,* IV, 1941); and Barna Occhini, "Medio Evo e Rinascimento" (*ibid.,* V, 1942). Of Italian scholars who wrote on the Renaissance during the nineteen-thirties, and who are not mentioned elsewhere in this paper, mention may be made of: Ettore Allodoli, Eugenio Anagnine, Vittorio Cian, Francesco Fiorentino, Eugenio Garin, Arturo Marpicati, E. F. Morando, Natalino Sapegno, A. Solmi, Giovanni Soranzo, Luigi Tonelli, Raffaele Venturi, and G. Zonta. Still interesting and valuable is the study of the late Vladimiro Zabughin (1880-1923) on the *Storia del Rinascimento cristiano in Italia* (Milan, 1924).

[82] *Kenyon Review,* VI, 1944, 201-36.

Renaissance—and the historian of literature has tended to go along with him—to the point where it has become easy even for a medievalist to agree with him in very much of what he has to say. Now a considerable knowledge of classical art and letters is recognized to have been the possession of ninth-century Frankish Gaul and Germany, the so-called Carolingian Renaissance (or at least *renovatio*); in the later tenth and eleventh centuries we have a less important Ottonian Renaissance in Germany and Anglo-Saxon Renaissance in England; we have a proto-Renaissance in southern France and northern Italy, in the twelfth and earlier thirteenth centuries, and a proto-Humanism in northern France and England.[83] It is for the fifteenth century, however, that the art historian would reserve the real renascence and the chief Renaissance; now, we are informed, comes the first real integration of classical form and content. In the fifteenth century there was no longer a feeling of actual historical continuity with antiquity,[84] as there had been in earlier renascences, but the association with classicism had become academic, and therefore became permanent, intangible but immortal,[85] and the period marked a rebirth of some of the more important aesthetic and emotional values of antiquity.[86] But in the claims thus made for the Renaissance, as a result of the increased historical distance and detachment from the ancient past—which is said to have made possible a much more complete and objective reconstruction of antiquity in the minds of men than had hitherto been possible—the medievalist will doubtless find a good deal that is unacceptable.

Inevitably there comes to the fore in any consideration of the Renaissance the name of Francesco Petrarca. Much has been written on Petrarch in the last decade. Here I should like to note chiefly the recent study by Mr. J. H. Whitfield,[87] which reasserts in the face of much learned literature to the contrary both the unity of Petrarch's thought and the importance of his contributions to modern culture. Humanism is said to have changed, "in the short space of a hundred years, the mind of Italy and the course of European civilization . . ."[88] while humanism itself is defined for us, in simple fashion, as "an attitude of mind."[89] Mr. Whitfield displays astonish-

[83]*Ibid.*, 208-18.

[84]Cf. Wm. S. Heckscher, in the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, I, 1938, 209, and on the feeling of continuity with the ancient past which medieval man is said to have possessed until well into the fourteenth century, see T. E. Mommsen (*Speculum*, XVII, 1942, 237-8, and refs. there cited).

[85]Panofsky, "Renaissance and Renascences," 225-9.

[86]It is interesting to note that this defence of the Renaissance comes from a scholar who, a decade ago, showed us that the famous late-Renaissance theme of "Et in Arcadia ego," made famous by the work of Nicolas Poussin and others—what seemed very much of a classical motif—is actually a classicized adaptation, even if the artist made it very much his own, of the medieval "Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead" (Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia ego," in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, Oxford, 1936, 223-54, especially 232 ff.). This recalls, in some ways, old Henry Thode's contention that the influence of Graeco-Roman antiquity upon Renaissance art was an external one. However, a more objective appraisal of the influence of antiquity upon Renaissance art will be possible, we may trust, when Professor Wm. S. Heckscher is able to complete his *catalogue raisonné* (or significant portions thereof) of classical works of art which were demonstrably known and accessible to artists of the Renaissance period: Heckscher writes me that the results "may vary quite a bit from accepted views" (Letter of February 24, 1947, from the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J.).

[87]*Petrarch and the Renascence* (Oxford, 1943).

[88]*Ibid.*, 19.

[89]*Ibid.*, 147.

ing courage or foolhardiness in a field where scholars have grown extremely cautious of spectacular generalizations.[90] His book is, nevertheless, skilfully and carefully written, entertaining and attractive to read, but both style and thought are marred by an excessive love of paradox. He has reason, however, to protest against the association of Renaissance culture with cruelty, and of humanism (at least early humanism) with Renaissance despotism, and he views with almost justifiable suspicion the neo-scholastics' exaltation of medieval society and their constant debasement of the Renaissance (chap. I).

Whitfield has sought to show that, if we read the works of Petrarch himself rather than those of his modern detractors, we shall find him consistent in his reflections on religion, classical studies, ethics, and politics,[91] and also in his attacks upon contemporary astrology, alchemy, and medicine (chap. II). Unfortunately Whitfield has omitted several inconvenient texts, easily to be discovered in the works of Petrarch, which would cast the shadows of ignorance and insincerity over the noble picture he has drawn of his famous subject. Unfortunately for Petrarch some of his modern detractors have not neglected some of these texts, but Whitfield has neglected the opportunity to explain them away, if he can, or to reconcile them with Petrarch's alleged consistencies. While Whitfield's book is thought-provoking, it is also a bit provoking. Thus Petrarch, whose disbelief in astrology is affirmed by Whitfield, could none the less write, in speaking of his triumph at the French court as an envoy of the Visconti, that a famous astrologer had foretold in his youth that he would enjoy familiarity with almost all the distinguished princes of his day and that he would experience good will at their hands.[92] Petrarch's attacks upon the Aristotelian and Averroistic science of his day are famous; they are quoted with approval by numerous scholars including Whitfield.[93] Petrarch dismisses contemporary scientists with the easy assurance that even if they

[90]See the remarks on humanism in P. O. Kristeller in *Byzantion*, XVII, 1945, 353-4 ff., 366-7.

[91]C. C. Bayley, "Petrarch, Charles IV, and the 'Renovatio Imperii'" (*Speculum*, XVII, 1942, 323-41), has not found Petrarch's political thinking a consistent whole: Bayley emphasizes that Petrarch's political theory revolved with "chameleon-like adaptiveness" (339) around three ideals of power—Roman-republican, imperial, and Italian, which in any transference from the realm of *Ideal*-to *Realpolitik* were bound to be in fundamental conflict with one another (340, 341).

[92]Fr. Petrarcae, *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus et variae* (ed. Giuseppe Fracasetti, Florence, 1859-63), III, 184: "mihi adhuc puero famosus quidam praedixit astrologus futurum ut fere omnium principum aut illustrium, quos mea tulisset aut latura esset aetas, familiaritates eximias atque insignem benevolentiam habiturus essem . . ." (*Fam.*, lib. xxii, *ep.* 2). Petrarch's much-heralded disbelief in dreams seems to spring from the fact that Cicero did not believe in them: "idcirco somniis fidem habeo non magis quam Cicero ipse, propter unius sui somnii fortuitam veritatem, multorum ambagibus implicatur . . ." (*Fam.*, V, 7, 16, in Vittorio Rossi, *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Francesco Petrarca*, XI, *Le Familiari*, II, Florence, 1934, 25). Thorndike has noted some of Petrarch's other superstitions and inconsistencies (*Magic and Experimental Science*, III, 220-2).

[93]Whitfield, *Petrarch and the Renascence*, 43-4. The two chief texts are in Petrarch's work *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* (in Fr. Petrarchae Florentini . . . *Opera quae extant omnia*, Basel, 1581, 1038, 1042-3; new edition by L. M. Capelli, in the *Bibliothèque littéraire de la Renaissance*, eds. P. de Nolhac and L. Dorez, Paris, 1906, VI, 24-5, 39-40); translated by J. H. Robinson and H. W. Rolfe, *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters* (New York and London, 1914), pp. 39-42; and discussed by D. C. Allen, "Petrarch and the Physicians" (*Restarch Studies of the State College of Washington*, III, Dec., 1935, 37-47).

gave valid answers to the questions they investigated, "they help in no way toward a happy life, for what does it advantage us to be familiar with the nature of animals, birds, fishes, and reptiles, while we are ignorant of the nature of the race of man to which we belong, and do not know or care whence we come or whither we go."[94] Messrs. Robinson and Rolfe, D. C. Allen, Whitfield, and many others have expressed admiration of Petrarch for these views, but they seem to me to be no more than the rhetorical gesture of the impatient reformer in every age, including the middle age, for this kind of sermonizing, which is regarded as evidence of the modernity of Petrarch's mind, was a commonplace with university preachers at Paris in the thirteenth century. It fills the sermons of Jacques de Vitry, Gautier de Château-Thierry, Robert de Sorbon, and others, for the most part still in manuscript, but whose contents Barthélemy Hauréau and Charles H. Haskins have explored for us a bit: "Clerks busy themselves with eclipses of the sun," we read, "but fail to observe the darkening of their own hearts by sin," while "far better it is that they should seek to know themselves than to search out the nature of animals, the virtue of herbs, or the courses of the stars."[95] These platitudes seem to me no less eloquent than those of Petrarch.

Whitfield informs us that Petrarch turned in impatient disgust from medieval speculation, which dealt with abstract ideas of God and the universe, the whole somehow ever in the clouds, and not with the concrete problems of the attainment of truth and virtue which God had posed for man on earth. "Petrarch reverses the attitude" [of the medieval scholastic], declares Whitfield, "and his reversal leads directly to the humanist ideal of education, and remains in European currency until the eighteenth century."[96] This point of view is illustrated by parallels in the thought of Petrarch and Voltaire and is buttressed with quotations from Edward Gibbon. "Europe," concludes Whitfield, "owes a debt to Petrarch greater than to any single figure since. His was not only the scepticism which dissolved the Middle Ages, it was also the affirmation which made possible the modern epoch."[97] In this connection, however, it is well to recall that the humanist attack which Petrarch led against Averroism and Aristotelianism was a protest not against scholastic theology, but against the philosophic impersonalism, the naturalistic science, and the collectivist view of man and the cosmos, which obtained in the north Italian centres of Padua, Bologna, Pavia, and Venice.[98] Against this soulless science the Florentine Platonist of the next century sought a refuge for his hopes and his yearning for an individualist life after death in the teachings of the ancient Academy and even in the prevenient grace of Augustinianism. This is not a movement from medieval "scholasticism" in the sense in which we think of the term: it is actually a revolt against the beginnings of modern science and the attitudes toward life and God that its methodology tends

[94] *Opera,* 1581, 1038; ed. L. M. Capelli, 24-5.

[95] Robert de Sorbon and Gautier de Château-Thierry (in MSS), cited by Chas. H. Haskins, *Studies in Medieval Culture* (Oxford, 1929), 49.

[96] Whitfield, *Petrarch and the Renascence,* 105.

[97] *Ibid.,* 114.

[98] Venice is the scene of Petrarch's attack upon the Aristotelians in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* (ed. L. M. Capelli), 39-40.

to induce.[99] This humanist protest is hardly a sign of modernity; indeed, it is almost the contrary; and upon this fact Giuseppe Toffanin, whose views we have already noted, has insisted in his historical studies of humanism.[100] For Toffanin's case I hold no brief, but I should find it no easier to defend Whitfield's antiquated view of *Petrarch and the Renascence.*

Although the political history of the several states in Renaissance Italy has been largely rewritten in the last generation, and the Italian journals are full of the results of archival research, fewer traditional ideas have been challenged in studying the politics, government, and diplomacy of the period than in studying its economics, sociology, religion, science, philosophy, and the like. Nevertheless, here too claims are made for Italian innovation. Thus Professor Garrett Mattingly has traced something of the history of "The First Resident Embassies";[101] he finds in the Italian Quattrocento the first resident ambassadors with permanent assignments and the origins of the modern system of diplomacy; and he relates the system to the game of politics being played so astutely to maintain a balance of power in the peninsula.[102] The diplomatic and military relations of the five chief powers in Italy in the later fifteenth century have been analysed in detail by Professor Ernest W. Nelson, in an article on the "Origins of Modern Balance-of-Power Politics."[103] Nelson likewise pushes the policy of balance of power back to at least the middle of the fifteenth century in Italy (most notably in the fairly constant alliance of Florence, Milan, and Naples against Venice). Some scholars have attached much importance to this feature of Renaissance history, but I think it can be easily overestimated. To balance and so to immobilize the power of an opponent you cannot defeat by yourself is a reaction basic to the psychology of any individual and any community. It is a manifestation of the will to survive. Examples could easily be produced from medieval, especially papal, history, and the territorial centralization and orderly internal government said to be essential to balance-of-power politics[104] are found to no small extent in the Latin and Byzantine states in Greece and the Aegean islands from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and, what is more important, the Venetians in Negroponte, the Franks in Achaea, the Greeks in Mistra, and a half dozen others played an adroit and consistent game of power

[99]Cf. P. O. Kristeller and J. H. Randall, Jr., "The Study of the Philosophies of the Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas,* II, 1941, 491 ff.). D. C. Allen, *Research Studies of the State College of Washington,* III, maintains that Petrarch "was essentially a Platonist" (41), whose "final philosophy is a spiritual one" (46), to whom the materialist interests and speculations of the Averroistic Aristotelians were very repugnant. Cf. Erminio Troilo, "L'Averroismo padovano" (in *Società Italiana per il Progresso delle Scienze: Atti della XXVI. Riunione,* 1938, III, 255-86).

[100]Whitfield casts, in passing, many aspersions upon medieval life and thought; this is not the place to answer or to challenge his observations (and with some of them I can agree). But if Whitfield is right in reminding us that "Olgiati's bland assumption that the Middle Ages and the system of St. Thomas Aquinas are one and the same thing" is a mistaken view (*Petrarch and the Renascence,* 41, cf. 22-3), neither are the middle ages to be summarily dismissed with a few silly stories from Jacques de Vitry, Passavanti, and the *Gesta Romanorum* (*ibid.,* 24-5, 49-50, 108). Petrarch's own scorn of the middle ages is the subject of a paper by T. E. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages'" (*Speculum,* XVII, 1942, 226-42).

[101]*Speculum,* XII, 1937.

[102]*Ibid.,* 432 ff.

[103]*Medievalia et Humanistica,* I, Jan., 1943, 124-42.

[104]*Ibid.,* 133.

politics and military balance from one decade to the next. I should not care to dispute the fact that Renaissance Italy furnishes a more perfect model of balance of power, within the very narrow definition we are given, than had perhaps hitherto obtained, but such diplomacy is in fundamentals a contribution of no special time and no special place; it is a response to given stimuli which operates inevitably, whether in a feudal or a *bourgeois* world, whenever such stimuli are present, and political organization makes at all possible any such response. From the medieval Greek histories of Karl Hopf, Wm. Miller, D. A. Zakythinos, and others, one would not find it difficult to trace the long histories of several alliances designed to secure a balance of power in Greece and the Morea through much of the period of Latin and Greek rivalry up to the advent of the Turk (1204-1456). I regret that very limited space forbids further discussion of this matter, but I find small value in the assertion that "in the inherent dynamics of international relations . . . Renaissance Italy foreshadowed the character of the family of modern western nations."[105]

I have sought to sketch here a few of the leading ideas set forth, and controversies engaged in, by Renaissance scholars in the past two or three decades. I have not, however, indicated any present needs in Renaissance scholarship although they are very many. Statements of Renaissance desiderata in political and constitutional history, in science, and in literature, with reports on our progress and the lack of it in the fulfilment thereof, have been recently made by Professors Louis B. Wright, F. R. Johnson and S. V. Larkey, Don Cameron Allen, and John G. Kunstmann, in a valuable number of the *Modern Language Quarterly*.[106] Professors P. O. Kristeller and J. H. Randall, Jr., have collaborated in a learned bibliographical "Study of the Philosophies of the Renaissance," in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.[107] Similar articles have appeared in other publications—*Journal of Modern History, Church History,* and the *Huntington Library Quarterly*—under the auspices of the Committee on Renaissance Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies. But these reports do not mention the work of one small group of research historians of whom I entertain much hope. In studying the impact of Greek art, literature, and philosophy upon Renaissance Italy, we must look increasingly, I think, to experts in Byzantine and Mediterranean history for new information. Although no one would question Italian primacy in the cult of Graeco-Roman antiquity in the later fourteenth century, study of the period on the broader basis of Mediterranean history, from Barcelona to Constantinople, has shown there were more lovers of the Greek—and Latin—classics than were known to Remigio Sabbadini when he wrote his classic account of *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*,[108] which has remained for over forty years one of our chief authorities for the discoveries of Latin and Greek manuscripts, and so for a knowledge

[105]Baron, "Towards a More Positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth- Century Renaissance" (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV, 1943, 27).

[106]Louis B. Wright, "Introduction to a Survey of Renaissance Studies" (*Modern Language Quarterly*, II, 1941, 355-62); Johnson and Larkey, "[Renaissance] Science" (*ibid.*, 363-401); Don Cameron Allen, "Latin Literature [of the Renaissance]" (*ibid.*, 403-20); John G. Kunstmann, "German Literature [of the Renaissance]" (*ibid.*, 421-38, especially valuable on Konrad Burdach and the much-disputed *Der Ackermann von Böhmen*).

[107]Vol. II, 1941, 449-96.

[108]Florence, 1905.

of their dissemination and influence. But when one speaks of the classical renascence in the fourteenth century, Catalonia merits, but has not gained, especial prominence and respect. The late Professor Antoni Rubió i Lluch of the University of Barcelona, one of the greatest medieval historians of the past century, has produced a score of works, largely unknown on this continent, which connect Catalonia with Greece in the fourteenth century and deal at the same time with the classical renascence in Catalonia.[109] I would particularly call attention to Rubió's brilliant study of "Joan I humanista i el primer periode de l'humanisme catala," in the *Estudis Universitaris Catalans*.[110]

We have not emphasized nearly enough, it seems to me, the political, economic, and military necessities, quite apart from aesthetic considerations, which advanced the cause of Greek culture in the Italian city-states—and in Catalonia—where the rulers and wealthy *bourgeois* had large interests in Greece and the islands of the Aegean. Pierre de Nolhac has very shrewdly observed "that it was not love of letters alone that decided the Florentine magistrates in the creation [of a chair of Greek in 1360]: Boccaccio had to convince them of the advantages which would result from the use of Greek in many of their commercial transactions and political relations."[111] At about the same date, in 1358, the Florentine family of the Acciajuoli became established in Corinth; thirty years later they were to occupy Athens; and the late William Miller has observed that few who visit the famous Certosa outside of Florence realize that it was built by the Acciajuoli from "the spoils of Greece."[112] Relating Byzantine affairs to Italian history will not, of course, rewrite our traditional views of the Renaissance, but it will certainly modify them, and no small part of Byzantine history in the fourteenth century must be the record of Catalan activities in the Levant.

For two or three examples of the Catalan material, to illustrate its importance in the history of an incipient aesthetic apperception of Hellenic beauty among western Europeans, we may draw upon some of the rich resources supplied us by the vast learning of Professor Rubió i Lluch. Catalan soldiers of fortune held the city of Athens for three-quarters of a century (1311-88), and their leaders came to love and appreciate the treasure they possessed. In a document of September, 1380 King Pedro IV of Aragon described the Acropolis as "the richest jewel in all the world, the like of which no other king in Christendom could match" (*lo dit castell sia la pus richa joya qui al mont* [*sic*] *sia e tal que entre tots los Reys de cristians envides lo porien fer semblant*).[113] Although Don Pedro IV is doubtless giving much consideration to the Acropolis as a fortress, there

[109]See the almost complete bibliography of Rubió's works in the *Homenatge a Antoni Rubió i Lluch* (Barcelona, 1936), I, ix-xv.

[110]No. 10, Barcelona, 1917-18, 1-107.

[111]*Pétrarque et l'humanisme* (Paris, 1907), II, 158.

[112]*The Latins in the Levant* (London, 1908), 287.

[113]*Documents per l'història de la cultura catalana mig-eval*, ed. A. Rubió i Lluch (Barcelona, 1908, 1921), I, doc. CCCX; Rubió, *Los Navarros en Grecia* (Barcelona, 1886), 106-7, and doc. XX (233); Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Athen im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1889), II, 191; Gregorovius, *Athens* (in Greek), translated by Sp. P. Lampros (Athens, 1904, 1906), II, 194; William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant* (London, 1908), 315; and Rubió, *Los Catalanes en Grecia* (Madrid, 1927), 133 ff. (The document, dated at Lérida, September 11, 1380, is from the Archives of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona, register 1268, fol. 126.)

is a strong aesthetic ring in his description. It is, in fact, as Gregorovius and Rubió i Lluch have emphasized, the first aesthetic eulogy of the Acropolis, after almost a thousand years of silence, to come to the mind and lips of anyone in western Europe.[114] Seven years later, when Catalan possession of Athens was being threatened by the Florentines, King John I of Aragon-Catalonia, son and successor of Pedro IV, wrote the officers and syndics of the city of Athens, in April of 1387, that they were not to think that he had forgotten such an illustrious part of his crown as was the city of Athens (*tan assenalyat membre com es aquest de nostra Corona*), and that with God's help he would make the Catalans in Athens a personal visit (*personalment visitar*), to enliven by his royal presence both the Catalans and all who served them in that historic city of the violet crown.[115] Rubió i Lluch has often asserted with pride that King John was the first European sovereign to express a desire to visit Athens, and it is fitting that this desire, and this expression of pride in the city and its great name, should have come from Don John, *l'aimador de la gentilesa,* who is very properly depicted as a humanist, the first royal humanist in Europe, in Bernat Metge's notable work *Lo Somni,*[116] and the King's name is linked with that of his distinguished friend Juan Fernandez de Heredia, confidant of six Popes of Avignon and Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, who was one of the first great dignitaries of Europe truly to interest himself in the history and literature of ancient—and medieval—Greece.[117] Rubió i Lluch has hailed Heredia as "one of the first philhellenists in Europe."[118] Heredia's interest in the Greek classics resulted in Aragonese translations, the first in any European vernacular, of thirty-nine *Lives* of Plutarch, parts of Thucydides, of Josephus (*de bello judaico*), and even of the Byzantine historian Zonaras; at his behest Aragonese versions were prepared of the Latin historical works of Eutropius and Orosius; and the Aragonese version of the Greek *Chronicle of Morea* was prepared for him, and the manuscripts proudly bear his name.[119] For the extensive cultivation of the Latin classics—Cicero, Vergil, Ovid, Seneca, and the Latin historians—I shall do no more than refer again to the many works of Rubió i Lluch and espe-

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[114]Gregorovius, *Stadt Athen,* II, 192; Gregorovius-Lampros, *Athens* (in Greek), II, 195; and see especially Rubió i Lluch, "Significació de l'elogi de l'Acròpolis d'Atenes pel Rei Pere'l Ceremonios," *Homenaje ofrecido a D. Ramon Menéndez Pidal: Miscelánea de Estudios linguïsticos, literarios, e históricos* (Madrid, 1925), III, 37-56; *Estudis Universitaris Catalans,* X, 23-4; and *Los Catalanes en Grecia,* 135 ff.

[115]Rubió i Lluch, *Documents per l'història de la cultura catalana mig-eval,* II, Introd., XVI, XLI; *Homenaje a Menéndez y Pelayo* (Madrid, 1899), II, 110; *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans,* I, 1907, 250; *Los Catalanes en Grecia,* 150; *et alibi.* (The document is from the Arch. Cr. Aragon, reg. 1751, fol. 51v.)

[116]Rubió, *Estudis Universitaris Catalans,* X, 55-7.

[117]Cf. Ferran Soldevila, *Història de Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1934), I, 384-6.

[118]*Estudis Universitaris Catalans,* X, 31.

[119]On Heredia as a patron of Greek, Latin, and vernacular letters, see A. Morel-Fatio's introduction to his edition of the Aragonese version of the *Chronicle of Morea* (*Libro de los Fechos*) (Geneva, 1885), *passim;* Karl Herquet, *Juan Fernández de Heredia, Grossmeister des Johanniterordens* (Mülhausen i. Th., 1878), 88-92); J. D. Le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes* (Paris, 1913), 199 ff., 242-7; and Jose Vives, *Juan Fernández de Heredia, Gran Maestre de Rodas* (Biblioteca Balmes, 1927); on his activities in Greece and cultivation of Greek Literature, ancient and medieval, see Rubió i Lluch, *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans,* VI, 1915-20, 184-93; *Estudis Universitaris Catalans,* X, especially 28 ff.

cially to his study of fourteenth-century Catalan humanism in the *Estudis Universitaris Catalans.*

Almost a century and a half before the appearance of the famed Complutensian Polyglot, Simon Atumano, the humanist Archbishop of Catalan Thebes (1366-1381?), seems to have prepared, during the later years of his Theban residence, at least part of a *Biblia Triglotta* (a Bible with Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts), which he dedicated to Pope Urban VI.[120] The career of Simon Atumano suggests one or two points of no small interest, it seems to me, in the history of Greek scholarship in Renaissance Italy. Before his translation to his Greek bishopric, Atumano had presided as bishop over the see of Gerace in southern Italy for some seventeen years, from 1348 to 1366,[121] and during these years, of course, Boccaccio was searching in vain, we are always informed, for a proper tutor in Greek. To Simon Atumano Greek was a native language; he was a classical scholar; and he was apparently quite willing to teach Greek. During the winter of 1381-2, for example, after his banishment from Thebes, Simon Atumano taught Greek—in the city of Rome itself—to Raoul de Rivo, famous dean of Tongres, an important figure in his day.[122] Simon Atumano was no obscure person; I cannot understand how Petrarch and Boccaccio overlooked him in the thirteen-fifties. He was well known to Pope Urban V (1362-1370) and to King Frederick III of Sicily (1355-1377). The Florentine humanist Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), himself the correspondent of Petrarch and Boccaccio, had a high regard for Simon Atumano as a scholar and as a *vir multe venerationis,*[123] and the Republic of Venice bestowed upon him the honour of its coveted citizenship in April of 1373.[124] On fourteenth-century Catalan humanism much more could be said; Rubió i Lluch has said it; but there is no space and no necessity here to repeat it. Enough indication has been given, I trust, that Italy possessed no complete monopoly of interest in Graeco-Roman antiquity in the late Trecento.

But whether the early Renaissance was a uniquely Italian phenomenon or not, it is Italy which quite properly has received the most attention and excited the most controversy. We have observed much difference of opinion among scholars, but I daresay this period will always cause much disagreement. Its culture is too complicated to be explained by any simple formula, and very likely, as Symmachus said of divine truth, we should realize, even on the lowly level of Renaissance scholarship, that there must needs be more than one avenue of approach.

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[120]Giovanni Mercati, *Se la versione dall' ebraico del codice veneto greco VII sia di Simone Atumano, Arcivescovo di Tebe: Ricerca storica con notizie e documenti sulla vita dell' Atumano* (Rome, 1916), 15-17, 19, 30-2, 41, with a brief biography of the Archbishop Simon, 26 ff., and some new documents, 47 ff. What is left of the *Biblia Triglotta* is now in MS in the Library of St. Mark's in Venice.

[121]G. Mercati, *Simone Atumano, Arcivescovo di Tebe,* 30.

[122]*Ibid.,* 16 and Rubió i Lluch, *Homenaje a D. Carmelo de Echegaray* (San Sebastian, 1928), 384.

[123]*Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati* (ed. F. Novati, Rome, 1891-1911), II, 480; cf. Rubió i Lluch, *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans,* IV, 1911-12, 47-8; *Estudis Universitaris Catalans,* X, 44 ff.; Salutati, *loc cit.,* speaks of Simon Atumano's having translated Plutarch's *De remediis irae* from the original Greek into Latin.

[124]*Regesti dei commemoriali,* lib. VII, no. 696 (ed. R. Predelli, Venice, 1876-1914), III, 108.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Soward asked Mr. Setton whether he thought that the rise of fascism in Italy led to an increase of interest in history more remote from current events and whether this explained an increase of interest in the Renaissance and the Middle Ages.

Mr. Setton replied that the Italians (and Germans) were always very interested in the middle ages and the Renaissance because of the way their present was built upon this past, but he doubted whether fascism had increased in any way Italian interest in the Renaissance. He said, however, that he believed the philosophy of idealism, an important foundation of the fascist philosophy, did have a close relationship to Italian historical writing as well as to Italian politics: its transcendentalism easily leaped over inconvenient facts in medieval history and thought, and glorified unduly the novel and peculiarly Italian characteristics of the Renaissance; in the realm of politics the idealists blithely passed over the importance of economic and industrial resources, to emphasize spiritual and moral values as the chief bases of national greatness. The same philosophical attitude could thus deepen Italian pride in the past and confidence in the future, both at the same time, and in this connection Mr. Setton spoke of the works of Giovanni Gentile both as a Renaissance historian and a fascist publicist.

Mr. Dorland said that the breadth and detail of Mr. Setton's paper made one wonder about the value of courses "surveying" civilization when given to junior students.

Mr. Sage said that this paper, and also that of Mr. Trudel, marked a real advance in Canadian scholarship, for instance by getting away from Canadian history. English-speaking Canadian historians have in the past been too little interested in ideas, probably much less than their French-speaking colleagues.

Mr. Lower commented on the question of science (which Mr. Setton had omitted when reading this paper). Did this include the story of geographical discovery?

He went on to say that he had not realized that the Renaissance men never thought of themselves as taking part in a "rebirth" of classical civilization. He felt, however, that this was quite likely because men are not normally historically minded. It was therefore logical for the men of the Renaissance to regard it as a new civilization. He drew a parallel with North American civilization which he said was really a new civilization. He said that the people of the United States are not hampered by Canadian nostalgia for Europe and are making a clean break with the past. They realize that they are building a new civilization.

Mr. Trotter said he believed that men are much more interested in the past than Mr. Lower had suggested. Men always have a keen desire to link their own lives with the past. He gave as example the development of architecture in North America. The men of colonial times built façades in the style of contemporary England. Later architectural developments continually harked back to past European styles. In the same way men of the Renaissance through contacts with material buildings must have been aware of the connection with antiquity and of the renewal of classical ideas.

Mr. Spragge referred to Mr. Lower's conception of "colonial mindedness." He suggested that interest in Europe is not "colonial mindedness." Co-operation with Europe is essential.

Mr. Setton said Mr. Lower and Mr. Trotter were not necessarily at odds. There is a European background in North American civilization but there are also new responses in North American civilization to material factors of the environment.