Philosophers of the Middle Ages
Psychology 390
Psychology of Learning
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Dark or Early Middle Ages Begin (475-1000)
• Formerly called the Dark Ages.
• Today called the Early Middle Ages.
• Creative thinking declines.
• General reduction of knowledge and writing in Western Civilization.

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Christianity
• Helped people turn away from the observable world that was full of pain and turmoil.
• Concentrated on heaven and the soul.
• Used introspection to know the soul.
• By seeking within oneself, you came to know that divine illumination came from God.
• So, to know the soul was to know God.

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Problem
• Science and philosophy were impossible to reconcile.
• However, most thinkers were devout, and worked within a religious framework.
• If accused of heresy the person concluded they had erred.
• However, as the middle ages progresses, religious dogma became more rigid and oppressive.

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Christianity
• Since the soul was the representative of God, spiritual truth could be found in all things.
• Thus, every thing, and every event symbolized something supernatural that was beyond human experience.
• Medieval people found symbols in everyday life.
• Medieval thinkers did not want to understand the mind or world in its own terms, but only as clues to the reality of God in heaven.

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Generally
• The middle ages sought a grand synthesis of knowledge.
• But all knowledge was of God, the Soul and the Spiritual world.
• It was believed that knowledge, tradition, and truth could be synthesized into a grand, authoritarian picture of the universe.
Result
• Most thinkers emphasized the mystical aspects of Neoplatonism.
• Rejected natural reasoning as unnecessary or dangerous.
• Fundamentalism and mysticism were important elements.
• Also happened within Islam and Judaism.

In Contrast to Christianity
• Islamic and Jewish scholars preserved and translated the works of ancient Greeks.
• Problem: Judaism and Islam failed to escape the fate of Latin Christendom.
• Conservatives among both religions found free inquiry too dangerous.
• Revealed truth was the way. Works were prohibited.
• Ultimately western thinkers in later middle ages differentiated between faith and ideas of reasoning and observation.

Islamic Contributions
• In the Christian world, people used introspection to understand the self as a unique human being.
• Based on Neoplatonism.
• In the Islamic World, a naturalistic psychology developed based on writings of Aristotle.
• Was a combination of Aristotle’s Psychology with late Roman and Islamic medicine.

Islamic Contributions
• Islamic thinkers changed the ideas of Neoplatonism into a more physiological context.
• Islamic medicine carried on the classical medical traditions.
• Islamic Physicians looked for brain structures that hosted various aspects of the mind discussed by Philosophers.

Husayn Ibn Sina
• Was a great Islamic physician and thinker.
• People had several souls
Overall

• Tried to combine the Aristotle’s philosophical psychology with the traditional though erroneous Roman medical tradition stemming from Galen.
• He and other Islamic physicians located the internal senses in different parts of the brain (e.g., Ventricles).
• His teachings became standard medical teaching until the 16th century when Vesalius again practiced dissection and proved him wrong.

Major Contribution of Islamic Philosophers

• They placed Aristotle’s philosophy into a physiological context.

High Middle Ages: 12 - 13 Centuries

• Islamic powers nearly engulfed Europe. Crusades have occurred, etc.
• Muslims and Jews retained the writings of Aristotle.
• Greek works are rediscovered in the west.

In the West

• Philosophical thinking resumes.
• Romanesque and Gothic churches are reconstructed.
• By 1200, most of Plato and Aristotle’s writings were available to Christian scholars.
• People are becoming more educated.
• Islamic philosophers begin to be known in the west.

Two Major Models Develop

St. Bonaventure (1221 - 1274)

• Resisted the introduction of Aristotle into Christian thinking.
• Took a dualist/Platonic view of the body.
• The soul and body are two separate and distinct substances.
  • Soul. The soul was merely using the mortal body for its earthly existence.
  • The essence of the person was the soul.
  • The soul was capable of two types of knowledge.
Knowledge of the External World

- Because it was united with the body, it could have the knowledge of the external world.
- But ideas were not innate, you had to learn the concepts.

Knowledge of the Soul Alone

- Was the knowledge of spiritual world.
- Source of this knowledge came through introspection.
- Ultimately, Bonaventure’s Platonism remained in Protestantism.

Second Model

- St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)

History

- Many thinkers are struggling to reconcile the writings of Aristotle’s scientific naturalism with the teachings of the church.
- Aquinas adopted Aristotle’s system and showed it was not incompatible with Christianity.
- However, while Aristotle stayed close to Nature and was silent on God,
- Aquinas reoriented everything to depend on and reveal God

Overall

- Aquinas’s resolution was make Aristotle the final authority concerning logical thinking and natural laws.
- But also recognized that faith goes beyond reason in arriving at ultimate truths.
- Began a split that would ultimately shattered theological metaphysics while simultaneously giving birth to science.

Late Middle Ages

- Cities grow
- Capitalism
- Nation States develop and finished feudal life.
- Severe economic depression begins
- Population declined
- Crime and violence increased
- Black Death (1348) Kills one third of the European population.
- Result - People became cynical and pessimistic
1453 Renaissance Begins

- Constantinople falls
- Greek speaking scholars fled to a west that knew only Latin.
- Major achievements occur in art and politics.
- Also, major social dislocation, misery anxiety, and superstition occur.
- 100 years war, then 30 years war occur.
  - Brings destruction to France and Germany.
- Black death by 1400 has devastated the population of Europe.

Famines and various diseases struck year after year
- Life reflected death
- Grim Reaper
- Scapegoats sought (Witches and Jews)
- Human mortality and suffering reaches new levels of bestiality.
- The Dark Side of human nature was everywhere.

Result

- No room for science - Seen as of little value.
- Humanism begins: Thinking becomes more human centered and less God centered.

Some Philosophers

- Filelfo
  - Taught that girls as well as boy could learn the classics.

Strum

- Placed great emphasis on formal methods of learning.
- Drill work and practice.
- Examinations to measure achievement
- Immediate correction of errors.
- Classified pupils on the basis of age and academic progress.

Loyola

- Founded the Jesuit order in 1540.
- Insisted on rigid disciplinary teaching, drill, and memorization of theological doctrines.
- Also included formalized study of classical languages and literature history, math rhetoric, logic, philosophy, and science.
- Used systematic repetition and practice, examinations, and closely supervised drill work being advocated by Strum.
Mulcaster (1530 - 1611)

- Head of Merchant Taylors' School in London
- Adhered to humanist views and implemented educational policies different from the Jesuits
- Advocated that instruction be adapted to the interests and mental abilities of pupils.
- Advocated that universal education be provided for girls as well as boys.
- Advocated that the study of specialized subjects be restricted only to pupils adequately prepared to take them