


 University
of Idaho

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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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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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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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Husayn Ibn Sina

- Was a great Islamic physician and thinker.
- People had several souls

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Diagram illustrating the structure of the soul according to Husayn Ibn Sina:

- Rational Soul**
 - Contemplative intellect - knows universals
 - Practical intellect - manages daily affairs
- Sensitive Soul**
 - Appetite**
 - Avoid Pain (irascible appetite)
 - Approach Pleasure (concupiscible appetite)
 - Interior**
 - Recollection - Recalls intuitions from memory
 - Memory - Stores intuitions from estimation
 - Estimation - Intuitions about benefit and harm
 - Compositional Human Imagination - Creative imagination
 - Senses**
 - Composite Animal Imagination - Combines images
 - Retentive Imagination - Image - Copies of objects
 - Common Sense - Combines the five exterior senses
 - Exterior Senses**
 - Vision
 - Hearing
 - Touch
 - Taste
 - Smell
- Vegetative Soul**
 - Reproduction
 - Growth
 - Nourishment

The Soul 12

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.

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Major Contribution of Islamic Philosophers

- They placed Aristotle's philosophy into a physiological context.

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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.

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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.

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Two Major Models Develop

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Second Model

- St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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1453 Renaissance Begins

- 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.

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Result

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

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Some Philosophers

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

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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.

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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.

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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

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