EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The fourteenth century in Western Europe is a bridge which links twelfth-century gains to sixteenth-century triumphs. Its glory is both in its political, philosophical, and artistic promise, and in its achievement—Dante, Chaucer, the Gothic cathedrals, and the universities. It is at once the height of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance.

Indeed, these conventional terms blur when we adhere to chronology: the very mediaeval Petrarch opens our eyes to the new humanistic ideals; the very mediaeval Chaucer and Boccaccio turn men's minds to a world of men not wholly transitory, and suffused with a love for human fame and action; the very mediaeval Marsilius of Padua and Wycliffe provide the stimulus to new liberties from oppression. Cola di Rienzi and Dante revise ideas of Roman liberty which, though caught in a cultural lag, will be actualized in succeeding centuries. The mediaeval concept of natural law, with its axiom "all men are by nature free," leads in France to the legal freeing of the serfs. Though the myths of agrarianism remain in Piers Plowman and Chaucer, the bourgeoisie is already leading one vanguard to a newer myth by its practical victories; and the proletariat, aroused out of its calm by the failure of the feudal ideal in a time of strife and pestilence, is making its first bid for amelioration. In Piers Plowman and in the English parliament the common people begin to emerge as a recognizable force in the commonwealth. The call for Church reform is not limited to the Lollards and the Spiritual Franciscans and their continental brethren; Gerson and Trent are anticipated by the orthodox Richard Fitzralph and a host of sermon-writers.

In art the Sienese school is breaking ground which will bear rich fruit in the later Roman and Venetian schools, and the creative spirit north of the Alps is discovering itself. The decline of the great ages of romance and lyric virility is as deceptive as the decline of the twelfth-century monastic reforms; new genres are on the way, and new reforms in the making. Chrétien's "make it new" is matched by the work of Chaucer and the Gawain-poet; and Italy, under the impact of Dante, broadens the base of literary accomplishment. Music flourishes with Machaut and the sophisticated composers of the Court of Burgundy. The drama, after its long evolution from a casual trope, is culminating in the
great biblical cycles; and playwrights and actors are slowly learning the professional techniques which will lead to the triumphs of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, France, and England.

At Oxford and Paris the foundations of modern science are being laid with a new attitude toward the facts of experience and new theories of motion and mechanics, to which, perhaps, Kepler and Galileo are indebted. Some of the most exciting logical speculations of our time find their only predecessors in the fourteenth century, when quantitative aspects of logic are stressed for the first time. A characteristic empirical skepticism anticipates the twentieth century, though the goals are strikingly different; and the reaction against a heavy reliance on rationalism also recalls our own time. One must not distort historic truth, yet there are parallels between the fourteenth century and our own which explain its appeal to us. Man moved then, as now, tortuously, but with both promise and achievement.

This is a statement of the theme of the conference in mediaeval studies held at Ohio State University on October 31 and November 1, 1958, sponsored by the Faculty Mediaeval Club. With full awareness of the risk of historical generalization involved, and of the bias which might surround any one man's view of history, the committee planning the conference sought for a thematic approach to the century which might unify the work of our lecturers—a view not limited to one man's idiosyncrasies but one which would at least call upon a working consensus of diverse specialists, and allow those who discussed the century to agree or disagree heuristically.

We were fully aware that in attempting to understand another epoch, we might merely reveal our bondage to our own century, that our judgments of history might be the reflection of our own historical circumstance and personal bias. Collingwood has reminded us that the theory of progress of Herder, to whom modern theories of social telos owe much, was actually tied completely to his own race and culture, and was indifferent to the statics and dynamics of other human groups. And Kant's gloomy view of the past led to exaggerated hopes for the future: "A profound knowledge of history would have taught him that what has brought progress about has not been the sheer ignorance or the sheer badness but the concrete actuality of human effort itself, with all its good and bad elements commingled."
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It may be, therefore, that the fourteenth century, with all its tyrannies, looks good to us because it looks so much like the twentieth. In appreciating the virtues of another epoch, we may only reaffirm our allegiance to our own. That we are bound in time may cause us to magnify the present for its resemblance to the past, or the past for its resemblance to the present. So may we likewise magnify when we attribute our present follies to a subversive crisis produced by either Ramus, Rousseau, or Marx. There is value in a cyclic theory like that of Vico, the brilliant enemy of "magnificent opinions concerning antiquity," the bias of the historian in favor of his subject matter.

Within human limitations our lecturers have avoided this error of magnificence or magnification. Their instrument is the microscope, but the microscope brings to light the flaws in strength as well as the tensile structure. A better case for fourteenth-century literature could have been made by calling on great names like Dante and Chaucer, and Grace Frank made this point when she accepted the task of revealing the best features of the century in France. Nevertheless, she has shown us that the momentarily hesitant France, exhausted from the two great preceding centuries, still had something to contribute. Giving the theory of war as an inhibitor of literature some content beyond the bare cliché, she shows that war was accompanied by cynicism and religious schism and the emptiness of the nostalgic Gallic chivalry. She traces new forces—the rising bourgeoisie, Machaut's *Voir Dit* which gives romance new substance, Froissart's light grace and serenity in the presence of shifting values, and Deschamp's satirical sense of responsibility. Her strongest claim is for the drama, for the scope and variety of character in *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, for the cyclic anticipations of *Palatine Passion*, for the touch of proletarian realism in *Le Jour du Jugement*. Though the work of the professional man of letters revealed a dependence on fixed, traditional sources and effects, the drama of the citizenry "had a forward movement, a potentially dynamic vitality."

Harry Bober likewise turns to the nations north of the Alps, where he discovers the source of the insights gained by Giovanni Pisano and even the unique Giotto, Jean Pucelle's transcendence of the best of the earlier Gothic painting, and the antecedents of Van Eyck's exploitation of the individual and particular. His major contribution is a reassessment of French Rayonnant architecture, which is usually compared unfavorably with the late
Gothic of England and Germany. Bober argues that Rayonnant had new architectural problems to solve, that it solved them, that it played a genuine part in the evolution of the Gothic, and that it leads without interruption to the better regarded Flamboyant of the next century.

In his article on mediaeval education, Father Astrik Gabriel finds educational expansion and idealism in both the fourteenth century and our own; each century has its new elite and its waves of reform. Some eighty-seven colleges were founded in the fourteenth century, as contrasted with some twenty-five in the thirteenth and some thirty-three in the fifteenth. Father Gabriel sheds light on college finances and antipluralism, on the career professor known as Buridan, who could jest at a pope, and on the domestic facilities and atmosphere of the colleges and their autonomy in Germany and England. He reveals the personality of the masters, the enthusiasm of the students, and the virtues of scholastic disputation within the frame of argument and the frame of college walls. The colleges fostered new architecture in the quadrangle and the library and new art in the chapels. "The moral integrity of the college administration was an encouraging example in a period of strong competition for benefices. No power—king, pope, bishop, ecclesiastical or lay authority—ever attempted in this century to press its own candidates for college fellowships." Academic freedom, assailed as it always has been, has its roots in solid history. For the mediaeval administrators were also teachers, though even then Alain could compare their organization to "une raison mécanique. Tout y est sans reproche, et tout y est inhumain."

A warning to modern administrators, caught in the cross-currents of a mass civilization, with heavy pressures from all sides forcing them to emulate Caesar's wife rather than Caesar or Brutus.

This discussion of the colleges, which were not so cloistered as they seem, leads us to consider the encompassing role of the state. With George Cuttino and Alan Gewirth we move into the area of politics, which conditions both education and art without destroying their autonomous resistance to outside tyranny.

Cuttino finds in the English Modus tenendi parliamentum a document that is in some respects more remarkable than the Defensor pacis, on which his fellow lecturer Alan Gewirth has lavished such penetrating analysis. He confirms Galbraith's date of 1316-24 and the hypothesis of William Airmyn's authorship, and provides a newly wrought biography which demonstrates Airmyn's
status and parliamentary expertise. Thus he delivers a coup de
grâce to the Maitland-McIlwain theory that the parliament of that
time was essentially judicial in nature and function—in the Modus
it is as political as it is today. Although the Modus is reformist
and "advanced" in so far as it was written by an orderly adminis­
trator, who was enthusiastic for parliament to be the center of
the realm but was plagued by the delinquencies of human nature,
especially that found in aristocratic bodies, an early date for the
work is not impugned. To establish a community of the realm,
it is necessary that the magnate not merely possess the name
magnate but that he attend the sessions of the ruling body: those
who work attain the power. Thus the author of the Modus was a
realist and no airy projector; if the barons are invited and refuse
to appear, they cannot chain parliamentary action. Abstention
is a doubtful weapon in true rule. The barons and the prelates
are "still here, very much here as countless struggles attest, but
the die had been cast." Cuttino lets the text speak for itself, and
it speaks loudly for an institution about which we grow danger­
ously cynical today when passivity toward those who choose to
act is more prevalent than in any preceding century.

In his article, Gewirth turns to the relationship of philosophy
and practical politics. He selects "a concrete historical period, in
which political conflicts took a very sharp form and evoked an
extensive body of writings at once theoretical and polemical from
men who were philosophers as well as publicists." Modern par­
allels tempt us: William of Ockham and mathematical logic,
Nicholas of Autrecourt and Hume, Thomas Bradwardine and
natural philosophers like Copernicus and Galileo. Even more
tempting are parallels in the strict realm of politics: Dante and
world government, Egidius of Rome's plena potestas and modern
totalitarianism, the ties of Marsilius of Padua with Machiavelli,
Hobbes, Luther, Erasmus, Rousseau, and Marx.

Gewirth, however, seeking something deeper than these obvious
parallels, chooses Martin Grabmann's famous correlation between
philosophy and politics and subjects it to a historical and philo­
sophical critique. Grabmann argues that the Christian Aristo­
telians, like Thomas Aquinas, made Church and State autono­

mous but parallel because they held reason and faith to be self­sufficient, that the Latin Averroists like Siger of Brabant and
Marsilius of Padua derived their antipapalism from their prefer­ence for reason over faith, and that the traditionalist Augustin­
ians, like St. Bonaventura and Egidius of Rome, favored temporal power for the pope because they subordinated reason to faith. Yet to make the pope Faith and the emperor Reason is, Gewirth would argue, a self-evident absurdity. There are papalist Aristotelians and antipapalist Augustinians. Wycliffe and Luther are notable examples of the latter possibility, and an Averroist like John of Jandun is a quasi-papalist who almost paradoxically elaborates philosophic reason as a twin truth to religious faith. Yet we need not deny *in toto* the relevance of philosophy to politics. Though the Augustinian Wycliffe and the Averroist Marsilius are both antipapal, life in their ideal states would indeed be different, for Wycliffe remains religious and Marsilius secular in emphasis. So Gewirth rounds the circle with a clear assertion that mind plays its part in politics through no dialectical determinism, but through the subtle variations which individual temper, historical situation, and creativity provide.

In his own way, each of our lecturers seems to have confirmed the "themes" of the conference. Thus, although France's literary advance is limited and sporadic; although the artistic advances north of the Alps are controversial; although the college system has human frailties which hamper its intellectual and material leaps; although parliament moves forward only to encounter a major conflict with the despots of the Renaissance; and although political theory retrogresses as well as advances, we may say that human striving makes appreciable gains in a century still conscious of its agrarian and feudal roots. An idea of progress which considers the goal achieved or soon achievable with some simple formula is empty enough; but history may yet be redemptive and not tragic. "Man moved then, as now, tortuously, but with both promise and achievement."


2. Marsilius seems to me not so much an apostle of "natural goodness" as a defender of a republican notion that the "people" is always the best authority on its own desires and sufferings. As Gewirth puts it in his *Marsilius of Padua: The Defender of Peace* (New York, 1950 and 1956), II, xli: "... The people's will, far from being subject to the vagaries of shifting appetites and partisan advantage, is inevitably directed to the common benefit." The elites who find multiple arguments against this basic assumption of democracy may be always questioned for their *cui bono*. 