Philosophy and Theology

- **Goals of Philosophy**

  - It indicates, etymologically, the "love for wisdom".
  - The human being reflects on himself and on what surrounds him.
  - Intellectual activity driven by the desire to know and to understand.
  - Philosophy is originated by curiosity, i.e. by an instinctive desire to go beyond what is given.
  - Philosophy basically consists in putting questions and trying to answer these questions through the application of the mind to every possible problem.
  - Philosophy is nourished by logic.

- **Origins and History of Western Philosophy**

  - VI century b.C. in Greece
  - The first philosophers try to understand the origin of everything (*arché*).
  - Philosophy starts from the observation of reality.
  - The observation is followed by the desire to understand the processes and the reasons leading to the existence of such a reality.
  - Philosophy is purely human and has the human being at the centre of its speculation.
  - The goal is the human happiness and the happiness of a human being consists essentially in his full understanding of himself and of his place in the world.
  - *Know yourself* is the goal of the human life. It is the goal of a research.
  - The first step and the motor of this research consists in the awareness of not knowing (*I know that I know nothing*). A human being who is satisfied of his knowledge will never progress in the understanding of the deep reasons of his being and living in the world.
  - Philosophy challenges common opinions, dogma, revealed truths.
  - Socrates was accused of ignoring the *pietas* and of corrupting the youth. He wanted to make the reasons of a person coming out through the maieutic process. The dialogue, intended as a path towards truth founded on rational basis, leads the individual to come to the truth and to the understanding of his reasons and of his place in the world.
  - Having this very concrete function, Socrates refuses to write. Plato is the first philosopher to use the written form for developing his speculation.

- Aristotle makes of this instinctive search for rational truth a systematic approach to every field of knowledge. He can be seen as a scientist *ante litteram*.

- He compares the doctrines and the ideas of other thinkers, taking into account their reasons before coming up with his own speculation. No dogmatic approach. Evaluating every aspect of a problem, accepting the positive sides that there are in every doctrine. Every doctrine can contain a part of a truth about a problem.

- The *corpus aristotelicum* fully shows the nature of philosophy as it was conceived at its origins: an all-embracing discipline. Aristotle deals with physics, metaphysics, politics, ethics, logic, astronomy, physiology, medicine. This all is included in the interests of a philosopher.

- Philosophy will be conceived as an all-embracing discipline also through the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

- But the perspective in the christian culture changes: philosophy as an all-embracing human discipline, provides the tools and the rational elements that should support the theological reasoning.

- Different perspective in the account of knowledge: good knowledge now is oriented towards the understanding of the Scriptures and, through this, towards becoming nearer to God in the spiritual life.

- In the Christian culture, knowledge is no longer centered on the human being in an horizontal perspective, but is driven by spiritual needs towards "feeling God" and in a vertical perspective.

- In the early councils of the Church, the bishops use philosophical categories and terminology for expressing dogmatic truths.

- For Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390), in his second theological oration, philosophy represents a "flat ground" on which building up theological questions.

- For Basile of Caesarea (329-379), young christians should find in the Greek philosophy what can be useful for the christian education.

- Augustine of Hippo (354-430) accompanies philosophical works to the theological and exegetical ones. The need of defining rational patterns is driven by 1) the need to fight heresies also from a rational and logical point of view and 2) by the necessity of supporting biblical exegesis with philosophical arguments.

- The relationship between faith and reason is constant through Augustine's works.

- The philosophical interest in a Christian perspective brings Severinus Boethius (477-524) to translate some works of Aristotle (mainly of logic) into Latin.

- In the Late Antiquity Plato is much more considered and used than Aristotle. Aristotle is seen as almost merely a logician.

- Aristotle's works will be rediscovered in the XI century thanks to new texts arrived to the West (Spain) through the Arabic culture.

- For many centuries before the XI century, the Western culture knew very few texts of Aristotle, almost uniquely about logic, like the *Analytica priora et posteriora*, the *Categoriae* (also knew as *Praedicamenta*), the treatise *De interpretatione*, and a few others.

- During the same time, Aristotle was very well known and considered as a pillar of knowledge in the Arabic culture that produced many translations and commentaries on Aristotle's works.

- The rediscovery of Aristotle in the West is made through Latin translations often directly from Greek but often also indirectly from Arabic.

- William of Moerbeke (1215-1286) and James of Venice (?-ca.1147) are the main translators of Aristotelian works this period.

- So the metaphysics, the physics and other important Aristotelian works circulate in the West and become the pillar of philosophy, in particular in the new institution of the University.

- If Peter Lombard is the reference author in the Faculty of Theology, Aristotle and his works become the pillars of the *curriculum* at the Faculty of Arts. He is indicated as *Philosophus* and represents the most relevant philosophical authority, constantly quoted in every treatise.

- The statutes of the Universities define the role of philosophy and of the works studied during the Bachelor and the Master.

- Philosophy is subordinate to theology and with a functional role: it provides rational structures and a set of *auctoritates* and quotations that can be used in theology. It is an ancillary function, very well indicated by the position itself of the Faculty of Arts in the medieval University: under the Faculties of Theology, Medicine and Law and with a preparatory function.

- Also in the Middle Ages, philosophy still preserves his function of all-embracing discipline, including metaphysics, physics, astronomy, perception of the human faculties, ethics, biology, etc.

- Due to its ancillary position and function, philosophy is often controlled by the theologians themselves, who have much power in the University. Example of Tempier's list of 219 erroneous philosophical propositions (1277). This censure is diocesan but also academic and is pronounced by the bishop together with the doctors of the Faculty of Theology!

- Many doctors in Theology, like Gerson, criticize the excessive use of philosophical categories.

- If formally philosophy still maintains the all-embracing approach that had since its origins, in the Middle Ages it loses the independent power of questioning about everything with the freedom to achieve independent results and conclusions.

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Medieval Theology

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- **Forms of Theology**

  - In the Middle Ages we have Theology made inside the University and outside the University.
  - In Latin and in vernacular.
  - Necessity of an interdisciplinary approach in the study of Medieval Theology.
    - Philosophy, Literature, History, Canon Law.
  - Notions of "tradition" and "authority".
  - Two main forms of theology: speculative and mystical theology.

- **Scholastic (University) Theology**

  - Faculty of Theology as one of the three upper Faculties in the system of the University.
  - Theology finds its rational and logical structures in the study of philosophy that is made at the Faculty of Arts. The faculty of Arts prepares the students for the study at the Faculty of Theology.
  - In the *curriculum* a very relevant place is given to the study of Peter Lombard's "Sentences" (*Sententiarum libri IV*).
  - Idea of creating a standard path for the preparation of the clergy and of the masters in theology.
  - The idea of "community", typical of the University as an institution, goes together with those of "common", "standard" applied to knowledge, teaching and learning.
  - Jean Gerson defines University theology as *communis schola doctorum*.
  - Creating a University knowledge that can be common implies the idea of control on ideas, books and people involved in the process of producing theological knowledge.
  - The masters in theology are allowed to teach everywhere (*licentia ubique docendi*).

- That of the masters in theology is a recognized <u>intellectual power</u>: in the matter of faith, heresy, heterodoxy, etc., they have the power to express a judgement and to do it *magistraliter*.

- This level of authority is important, but subordinated to the one of the bishop or the Pope: they decide *iuditialiter.*

- Example of the medieval *determinationes*.

- The masters write their works the most of the time for internal reasons (i.e. for the University), but often they also address their works to priests, nuns, monasteries, various communities, kings, princes, etc.

- The position of the theologians is above that of the masters of arts.

- Necessity of reading the academic texts thinking about the crossroad of powers: magisterial power, civil power, church / hierarchy power.

- **Speculative and mystical theology**

- Speculative / systematic theology is properly the theological science made at the University in the Middle Ages.

- It leads to the production of commentaries, *summae*, *quaestiones disputatae*, treatises.

- Speculative theology systematizes the theological knowledge through the constant reference to the authorities (*auctoritates*). Concrete strategy: an impressive amount of quotations.

- Medieval scholastic theologians use three kinds of authorities: the Bible, theological authorities (in particular Augustine and Boethius) and philosophical authorities (mainly Aristotle and Plato).

- Mystical theology expresses the spiritual impulse of the human being searching a personal contact with God in the soul.

- This kind of theology proceeds on a different path than that of speculative theology: key concepts of mystical theology are: emptying, abandon, contemplation. In this perspective, God cannot be reached intellectually, but only spiritually, i.e. in some kind of union of spiritual love.

- This form of theology is also called "negative", because instead of adding knowledge, the path to the mystical union requires the emptying of the soul from knowledge and from every form of human assertion. If God is pure spirit, the human being needs to become as spiritual, light, detached from the human things as possible.

- In the *via negationis* the human being is aware of his limits and of the difference between the human forms of knowledge and God, who is above every possible categorization and, saying it with Nicholas of Cusa, *coincidentia oppositorum*.

- Mystical works in the Middle Ages are written not only in Latin, but very often in vernacular. This form of theology has a bilingual dimension, while the speculative theology made at the University is typically in Latin.

- Speculative theology often tries to control mysticism, in particular stating that before accessing the spiritual dimension of theology one should first go through the path of the speculative, dogmatic, systematic theology, for avoiding the mistakes given by the radical spiritualism and the excesses coming from the ignorance of the Holy Scriptures.

Some reference scholars

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Some Databases

Corpus Thomisticum

https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html

Alberti Magni Opera Omnia

http://albertusmagnus.uwaterloo.ca/

Library of Latin Texts

http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Search.aspx

Aristoteles Latinus

http://clt.brepolis.net/ald/Default.aspx

Database of Latin Dictionaries

http://clt.brepolis.net/dld/pages/QuickSearch.aspx

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