



The early philosophers of Renaissance were famous for their attempts to enquire nature by means of basically two different approaches: Magic and Naturalism. Magical thinking tries to abruptly *plunge* down into the deepest secrets of nature and to steal power and knowledge by making use of rules, methods and a style which are different from the naturalistic *stance*. This latter tries to understand nature by placing nature itself at the first place, and not by supposing that there are secret forces hidden in it. In this sense the so called Naturalists of Renaissance *grounded* the first fundamentals of a true empirical research which later on, during the XVIIth century would be called and recognized as “scientific method” as established by Galileo Galilei in Italy. Let us put the accent on the first way, magical thinking, since the second one directly leads to the development of western science and empiricism and is thus better known.

Most referring figures for early magical thinking are mainly Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Philipp Bombastus of Hohenheim, also known as Paracelsus. For a magician of the early Renaissance, research on Nature means understanding universal life in every form and its global essence of unity; getting into instant communication with every life form of universe; becoming empowered by natural forces one has been *snatching* from the nature’s *core* by *coaxing* it, by convincing it to release power to man using “white” sorcery. White sorcery is the good one, because it wants to donate to mankind knowledge and *wisdom*, balance with the world and spiritual unity: its symbol is the sun and its *dazzling* light. Black sorcery, instead, has been always refused by these thinkers, since it works mostly against freedom of mankind: *unwary* action can dig out obscure demons, *haunting* ghosts and deepest darkness which can trap man into eternal *evil*.

Magic philosophers believed that matter, spiritual forces and divine intellect are all interlaced in one unique essence: Nature has a universal soul, breathing with its own synchronized pace, and blowing its vital spirit into every single being and material thing, even the *tiniest* one. So, matter contains the universal spiritual force while this universal spiritual consciousness can materialize itself into matter and Nature, if safely manipulated and known. They wanted religion not to refuse this attempts to discovering into Nature all these positive forces: religion would accept them as a part of the eternal circle of life, they thought. Magic philosophers wanted to approach Nature with mathematics, medicine, the Cabbala, the use of talismans and symbols, the knowledge of natural herbs and of all hidden and essential principles of matter with its basic elements and properties.

A very modern vision of the world as exposed by these thinkers was the principle of a unification of the two main types of universes existing around Man: microcosm and macrocosm. There is, on the one side, a binding connection between the lowest level of Nature, made up by basic elements, and the gigantic structure of the universe, the macrocosm as the totality of geometrical movements of planets and stars as seen by those thinkers. This stance shows its fully acceptable appraisal *nowadays*, since we are living in the world of modern physics and cosmology, which in the last two decades have been speculating on things like *Multiverses*, *String Theory*, Quantum Mechanics, *Teleportation*, Speedlight, *Wormholes* and on many other physical theories which have been building up around us a plenty of confirmations about this close communication between micro- and macrocosm. So Magic thinkers believed that Man lies between these two world, and must be conscious that exactly for his position he can manage to merge both realms: the world of matter down here and the world of space, over there, that is the realm of metaphysical forces animating every physical element of our life.

Magic philosophers thought they were true wizards, they were expert on natural sorcery, the “white” one. They wanted to take control of life and power over matter in order to reach a highest spiritual level, and the unification of all energies present into the physical and psychical reality. Magic was *meant to be* real science. They wanted to become “divine” not in the sense that they just were *keen* for power over mankind, but in the pure and noble sense of a *humble* comprehension of the universal order and of a direct contact with the *whole* spiritual energy that rules all visible and invisible realms between which Man has found his middle position.

*Mrs. Frances Yates (1899-1981), British historian, University of London. She wrote “*Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*” in 1964. She transformed Renaissance historiography, by showing how magical thinking had been important for the birth of early modern science of XVIIth Century. She also demonstrated the great influence of Hermeticism on early science, magical thinking and Naturalism. Hermeticism was an ancient tradition of thought which goes back to the early centuries A.D. and which shows many contacts with Platonism, and parts of Christian and Egyptian religion. She studied how Giordano Bruno and many philosophers of Nature in the Renaissance had been strongly influenced by Hermeticism and magical thinking.

Notes for the Lecture

- Magic as spiritual power, force.
- Hermeticism, Hermes Trismegistos
- Platonism, and Neoplatonic philosophy.
- Marsilio Ficino: Magic can become part of Religious thinking.
- Magic means creation from divine powers, merging the earth with the sky, thinking that Man is divine and can come back to the source of his divine power by enquiring the magical essence of Nature. Because he is the reflection of God into Nature, and so has immediate possible access to the forces of Nature.
- Magic is not an enemy of religion but part of it. It just has to be recognized as such.
- All philosophies can be gathered under magical thinking, that is they can be synthesized all together as aspects of magical thinking.
- The magician, expert of natural sorcery, can take control of his life and reach a highest spiritual level.
- Love and relation based on love to Nature is the ground for action for a magician. Like in Plato's Symposium. Eros as a force which can lead to Nature and its secrets.