The Warfare of Science and Religion

- What is meant by it?
- Did it ever occur?
- When did it occur?
- What problems arise with this terminology?
- If this warfare is less than an established fact, what can be said about the actual relation between religion and science?

Overview: Religion in Europe, 1400-1600

Turmoil and Reform

Turmoil (some examples):

- “Babylonian Captivity” -- Papacy moved from Rome to Avignon, under the influence of French King. (1309-1377) Popes live in luxury, embroiled in secular politics, governing system of the church came to be widely recognized as horribly corrupt.

- “Great Schism” (1378-1415) -- Two Popes. Council of Pisa (1409) tries to solve the issue, creates three popes. Council of Constance ends the problem, but does not effectively address issues of corruption in the Church. (Burns Hus instead.)

- Indulgences sold to build St. Peter’s Cathedral. Could even buy forgiveness for sins not yet committed.

Reform: Martin Luther:

- German Priest/Monk/University professor
- 1517 posts “95 theses” calling for discussion on church corruption, esp. indulgences.
- Begins rethinking other aspects of Christianity in his day and concludes:
  - Salvation is produced by God’s grace, not the church’s decree. “Faith” (not rejecting Grace) is the means by which the individual is “saved.”
  - “Hearing the Word” is necessary for faith.
  - The pope is part of the problem not the solution.

1530 -- Augsburg Confession.

- An attempt was made by the Emperor, Charles V to heal the division between Rome and the now excommunicated Luther and his followers. The meeting was held at Augsburg in 1530
- The document the Lutherans presented for “agreement” is now known as the Augsburg Confession. It clarified and solidified the Lutheran doctrine. Among other things, the Augsburg Confession claimed:
  - The Scriptures are the final authority in all matters of faith.
  - Salvation comes by God’s gracious gift of faith.
  - Clergy are important for salvation, but not necessary, and the present church hierarchy was ungodly.
  - Regardless of what “sacrament” has come to mean in later history, only two of the Roman seven matter for getting the individual to heaven. (Baptism/Eucharist.)

Permanent Division:

- After Luther’s death in 1546, Wars raged across central Europe as princes and nobility faithful to Rome attempted to retake territories which had become Lutheran.
- War between Catholics and Lutherans ended with the Peace of Augsburg, in 1555.
- The treaty signed there declared that the religion of any territory should be determined by the ruler of that territory, whether Lutheran or Catholic. (Cuius regio eius religio.)
- Other forms of Protestantism were not included in this treaty.
Reform: the “Reformed”:

- There were a number of reform movements rejected by the Lutherans as having gone too far, and thrown out much that was important and good in the Church. These fall into two categories: The “Anabaptists” and the “Reformed.”
- The Anabaptists were the most radical in their “reformation” ideas, rejecting all sacraments except as mere symbols as well as all established forms of church hierarchy.
- We’re concerned with the Reformed who were more moderate than the Anabaptists and came to constitute the most popular and widespread form of Protestantism.
- While Lutherans did not accept anything which they found contrary to the Christian Scriptures, the Reformed tended to reject anything which was not explicitly stated in the Scriptures.

Calvinism:

- John Calvin, French born, trained in Law but obsessed with theology, came to epitomize “Reformed” doctrine. Trained as a humanist.
- Calvin moved to Geneva, Switzerland and established it as a “theocracy.” Church doctrine governed all aspects of life.
- Wrote the *Geneva Catechism* and (over nearly twenty years) the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The latter is a four volume “summary” of Protestant doctrine as understood by Calvin.

Features of Calvinism:

- Presbyterian form of Church government.
- Rejection of art in churches and an intense focus on preaching in services.
- Doctrine of “Predestination”: Only those predestined by God from eternity to be saved would be saved. They are the “Elect.”
- While only God knows the identity of the elect, one’s election will manifest itself in a “Christian Life.”
- This meant avoidance of sin, and living by a strict moral code: mandatory church attendance, no dancing, card-playing, drinking, fancy clothes, etc. Geneva was to be an exclusive community of the elect. Those not conforming were cast-out.
- Christians should have “nothing to hide.” Large windows allowed Geneva residents to check-up on one another.

More features of Calvinism:

- Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion were both effective (as per Luther) and symbolic.
- Tended to divide sharply between Creator and Creation.
- An intense focus on the ‘sovereignty’ of God.
- Geneva was the ideal, but Calvinism modified its political forms to adapt to other countries. England, for example came to be essentially Calvinist in doctrine, but retained Bishops (Episcopal government) and many elements of “Catholic” worship.

England: an odd case:

- Did not convert to Protestantism for religious reasons
- Henry VIII wanted a divorce from his wife, Catherine of Aragon, but the Pope would not grant it.
- Henry declared himself the head of the English Church, and hence became “Protestant.”
- This opened the door to legitimate forms of Protestantism, but Henry, and most of his clergy, never objected to most Catholic teachings.
- England became a melting-pot for a wide range of religious ideas.
- In time it came to adopt Calvinist doctrine, for the most part, and hence became truly Protestant, but a remarkable degree of latitude always existed.
- This is not to say that everyone believed such latitude to be a good thing: “Puritans” were continually pushing for a more Calvinist Church, while Catholic elements persisted long into the seventeenth century, trying to reunify with Rome.

Reform: Catholic: the Council of Trent:

- The Roman Church was still in need of reform, but now Roman Catholicism had another problem to deal with, the division of the Church.
- A council was called in Trent, in northern Italy, to address both problems.
- Met from 1545-1563.
- Constituted a “doctrinal lockdown” establishing which teachings were Catholic, and what would not be tolerated.
- Produced the genuine reforms which Luther had first called-for, condemning sale of indulgences, pluralism, simony, and abjuration.
- Instituted: Episcopal visitation of parishes, diocesan seminaries w/ a set Catholic, curriculum, and the education of the Laity.
Also at Trent:

- Seven sacraments affirmed.
- Clerical Celibacy affirmed.
- The authority of tradition was declared to be as necessary as the authority of Scripture. The two were to function together.
- The doctrine of Purgatory was affirmed.
- Veneration of Relics, prayers to saints, and prayers for the dead were affirmed as good and necessary practices.

The Jesuits:

- Founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1540.
- Not monastics, but an active preaching order dedicated to missionary work in foreign lands, and regaining the lands lost to Protestantism.
- Answerable only to the Pope: “The Pope’s Marines.”
- To fulfill their mission they were trained over more than a decade in theology and also in a non-theological discipline.
- Focus on education made them formidable opponents of the Lutherans and Calvinists.
- Used both parish and University to spread their message.
- Came to largely determine the direction and character of the Council of Trent.

Galileo Galilei: The Early Years

- 1564-1642
- First half of his career -- mathematics professor at Pisa, then Padua.
- In this capacity he made his greatest contributions to the development of modern science -- experiments in motion and terrestrial physics.
- Attracted to the Copernican system prior to 1604.

Courting the Medici Court:

- For a number of years Galileo courted the favor of the Medici family of Florence, actively seeking a position which would allow him the money and freedom to devote his time to research.
- He was also motivated by a desire to have the prestige of a “philosopher” rather than the lowly reputation held by a “mathematician.”
- Means of attempting to get in good with the Medici included:
  - Tutoring young Cosimo II
  - Casting a favorable horoscope for his mother, Christina
  - Finding them a “magnet.”

Success:

- Sometime in 1609 Galileo obtained a recently invented curiosity, the telescope.
- He made improvements in the lenses and magnification and turned it heavenward.
- This resulted in several discoveries which challenged the still widely held Aristotelian system of the Cosmos.
- The first of these, included in his Siderius Nuncius of 1610 included:
  - Lunar mountains
  - Starry nature of the Milky Way
  - The Four moons of Jupiter, which he named after Cosimo Medici and his three brothers.
- Galileo was appointed Court Philosopher to the Medici in 1610, with the promise of more reputation building discoveries for the Medici.

Subsequently:

- The “Starry Messenger” (Siderius Nuncius) was sent to major courts throughout Europe along with a complimentary telescope, so that philosophers elsewhere could confirm the findings (and the greatness) of the court philosopher of the Medici.
- Galileo observed sunspots (further damaging the Aristotelian Cosmos) and the “phases of Venus”
- This latter discovery he took as “visual proof” (supported by Jupiter’s moons) of the correctness of the Copernican theory.
- He attracted serious negative attention for this claim, as it was directed, often personally, at downplaying the abilities of those who rejected Copernicanism.
- Regardless of how much of this was a political move to gain fame by challenging the famous, he was taken very seriously by those who disagreed with his conclusions, most notably, the Jesuits.
The Letter to the Grand Duchess:
• During a Medici court breakfast in 1613, a disgruntled philosopher, Boscaglia, insisted that the Copernican idea of a moving earth was unacceptable, and contradicted Scripture.
• Galileo’s position was defended by his friend, Castelli, both during the meal, and after when the Grand Duchess called him in for further explanation.
• Galileo then wrote a tract, the Letter to Castelli, in which he defended the compatibility of Copernicanism with Christian Scripture and Tradition.
• In 1614 (Dec. 20) a Dominican professor named Caccini used his prominent position to denounce Copernicanism as contrary to Scripture in a public lecture.
• Shortly thereafter it was alleged that Galileo’s Letter to Castelli was written against Caccini.
• Galileo responded by publishing an enhanced and expanded version: the Letter to the Grand Duchess.

For Monday, read, The Galileo Affair, pp. 87-118, the Letter to the Grand Duchess
In reading the Letter ask:
• How did Galileo turn the tables on his accusers, making them the “real heretics?”
• How did Galileo play-up to the Medici in his writing?
• How did Galileo defend his Catholicism?
• What are the terms for a proper separation of “Science and Religion?”
• What does it mean for Galileo to say that Theology is the Queen of the Sciences?

For Wednesday, read The Galileo Affair, pp. 146-153 (Consultants Report on Copernicanism through Cardinal Bellarmine’s Certificate.) Also pp. 287-293 (Sentence and Galileo’s Abjuration)

Galileo

After the Letter to the Grand Duchess

Initially:
• December 1615 -- Galileo chose to go to Rome to defend himself orally. While there he claimed:
  – Copernicanism was provable, not a mere “theory”
  – The motion of the tides proved a moving earth
• March 1616 – Edict from the Pope prohibited him from teaching or defending Copernicanism. Specifically:
  – It was regarded as “heresy” to assert that the sun was the center of the world and immovable, yet with local motion.
  – It was regarded as “erroneous” to assert that the earth was not the center of the world, nor immovable, but rather moved as a whole, also with diurnal motion.
• Galileo was informed of these decisions by Cardinal Bellarmine personally, in a closed-door meeting.
• This decision came as a surprise also to the Jesuits, many of whom saw Galileo as a rival, not an enemy. They also began to wonder how secure they were.

Intermission:
• Galileo returned to Florence and waited.
• Meanwhile, his favor with the Medici was waning -- they used his discoveries to their political advantage, but would not be embroiled in controversy.
• Galileo was not idle:
  – 1620 -- Orazio Grassi, a friend of Galileo’s, published a book in which he challenged Galileo’s opinions on comets.
  – Grassi had clearly misunderstood Galileo’s work, and what Galileo had originally claimed.
  – Most significantly, in presenting Galileo’s position, he had confused theology and natural philosophy in exactly the way that Galileo had argued against in the Letter.
Why 1623?

- Maffeo Berberini was a close friend of Galileo’s for many years (he composed a poem in Galileo’s honor in 1620).
- On August 6, 1623, Berberini became Pope Urban VIII.
- Berberini had always enjoyed Galileo’s “spunk,” and Galileo was hopeful not only for Copernicanism, but also for the possibility of a new patron. (perhaps the ultimate patron, for a Catholic seeking sanction for his ideas).

From Urban’s angle:

- Urban did enjoy The Assayer, though it caused serious bad blood between Galileo and the Roman College (where Grassi taught).
- Urban knew that Galileo’s evidence for Copernicanism did not constitute conclusive proof.
- Especially leery of the argument from “tides.”
- He could give Galileo a bit more room, knowing that in the past he had always gotten his friend to concede the theoretical (in the modern sense of the word) nature of his work.
- Berberini had often used the maxim, “it was possible that God could have made things otherwise,” and Galileo would agree.
- It turns out that Galileo knew these words too well for his own good.

Galileo’s Gamble:

- Not only had Berberini been elected Pope, but astronomers sympathetic to Galileo’s views were beginning to rise into academic positions.
- Galileo suspected that he could now move forward with his defense of Copernicanism again.
- 1624 -- he began work on a publication which would give Copernicanism a fresh hearing, the Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems.
- Beginning in 1630 -- Galileo acquired no less than seven imprimaturs for publication, ranging from the mark of the local inquisitor in Florence to senior officials closer to the Pope.
- To satisfy Riccardi, the Roman official in charge of such publications, Galileo agreed that he was presenting Copernicanism as something other than an established fact, and include important objections to Copernicanism in his work.

Feb. 1632 -- The Dialogue

- Set as a friendly debate between advocates of Ptolemy and Copernicus.
- It was a summary of Galileo’s work in defense of Copernicus.
- The Cast:
  - Salviati: Named after a friend of Galileo, defender of Copernicanism.
  - Sagredo: Named after another friend of Galileo, the host and moderator of the debate.
  - Simplicio: the advocate of Ptolemy, named after a 6th c. Aristotelian, but the name also means “simpleton.” Presented objections to Copernicanism as the product of flawed thinking and slow wit.

The Mistakes:

- Presented the ebb and flow of the tides as the ultimate evidence of the motion of the earth.
- (There were serious problems with this argument, b/c there was too much variation in the tides from day to day, and over seasons, for this to be a good support.)
- “Salviati” admits that the theory needs more work.
- True to his promise to Riccardi, Galileo ended the dialogue with an argument that Copernicanism was not conclusive: he used the words of Urban VIII, that “it was possible that God had made things otherwise” and put them in the mouth of “Simplicio.” (Bad move -- angered the Pope.)
- By August 1632, the book had been suspended and Galileo was brought up on charges.

The Trial:

- Began April 12, 1633.
- Galileo was charged with
  - ignoring the decree of 1616
  - Failing to get proper authorization before publication.
- Faced with torture, Galileo renounced all support of Copernicanism.
- From 6 July, 1633, Galileo spent the rest of his life under house arrest.
Epilogue:

• “The sentence was designed to secure what Bellarmine and the decree of 1616 had not: Galileo’s silence and the compliance of Catholics.” (Michael Sharratt) It worked.
• The Dialogue was translated into Latin and published in France (where allegiance to the Pope was in question).
• Galileo wrote no more on the subject.
• He did write two treatises on terrestrial physics which were published in the Protestant Netherlands.
• Astronomy was almost entirely shut-down in Italy.
• Astronomy was advanced in France and the Protestant lands, especially England.

The Basic Ideas:

• Magic -- the use of occult (hidden)/spiritual powers to manipulate the world and one’s own identity within it.
• Natural Magic -- uses invisible forces and properties of natural things (“creation” or “the creatures”) to manipulate…
• Demonic Magic -- calling upon and commanding the power of spiritual beings to manipulate…
• A necessary assumption is that all things in the cosmos are connected so that nothing can be to a part done without affecting the whole, as in a spider’s web.
• Magic is learning to manipulate the strands by which the whole is connected.

In all forms of Renaissance Magic:

• Language is power. Words have the power to change the world and control it, but so do:
  – Signs
  – Images
  – Numbers
  – Music
• All of which are part of the “language” embedded by God in Creation. (cf. p. 90)
• Recall that according to the Jewish and Christian mythology creation itself was an act of speech: “And God said, ‘let there be…”

How far is too far?

• All of the Christians involved believed that there was such a thing as “bad magic,” but no one could agree on where to draw the line.
• Consequently, there is a constant reliance upon “disclaimers” by the magi.
• This made it difficult in the past to determine who was, and who was not, an adherent to the practice of magic.

Three points at this point:

1. Our modern popular portrayals of Magic, Sorcery, and the “occult” (whether from WB or Disney) are but the images of the everyday Renaissance era infused with Hermetic/Cabalistic signs and symbols.
2. The popular myth of an essential conflict between “Christianity” and the “Occult” is historically groundless. (A 20th century development as we presently have it.)
   • The issue for earlier Christians was which occult powers were compatible with “orthodoxy.”
3. Modern “science” shares with magic the belief in the manipulation of nature, the belief that special knowledge leads to the mastery of occult powers in the universe, etc. and is indebted to magic for these aspects.

Some Problems with our Popular (media) perception:

• The images of Magic and sorcery which dominate modern cultural depictions are more properly “Renaissance” images than medieval ones.
• The line between “Christianity” and “Magic” varies from author to author.
• The line appears clear to us only if we oversimplify both Christianity and Magic.
• Magic, with a very few exceptions, was practiced by those who regarded themselves as true Christians, not by some clandestine society of “pagan” subversives. It was a phenomenon within the church, not a reaction against it.
• The term “magic” is often far too self-referential for easy definition. E.g. Among those who condemned “magic” it meant calling upon the aid of demons. Those “magical” or “superstitious” practices which did not confuse “God” and “demons” were, by definition, not magical.
• “Magic” as we now use the term, refers to a set of beliefs about the natural world which our “science” has rejected. “Science” incorporated others, which are, understandably, not condemned.
Three elements of the Renaissance Magic Tradition

1. Ficino and the Corpus Hermeticum
2. Pico and the Jewish Cabala
3. Christian Tradition
   - Note the connection to the "recovery of ancient texts" motif of Renaissance Humanism.
   - The ancient texts of the Corpus Hermeticum and the forgotten texts of the Cabala were taken together with the Christian texts.
   - Taken together, the recovery of these texts was seen as the recovery of the Prisca Theologia
   - Prisca Theologia The ‘Pristine’ or ‘first’ theology: that which in the most ancient, and purest times, was believed concerning (the one, meaning “Christian”) God. It could be recovered through reading the most ancient sources.

Corpus Hermeticum
- Claimed to be a collection of writings from an ancient Egyptian philosopher, Hermes Trismegistus, a large number of Renaissance readers believed it.
- Contains religious/philosophical material, but also directions and instructions for magic and alchemy.
- Hermes was assumed to have worshipped the Christian God.
- ACTUALLY: Gnostic/Neo-Platonic writings from 2nd - 3rd century Egypt.
- (Some sources are far older -- Jewish, Persian, etc.)
- Gnostic — from Gnostikos “knowledge”: (most often) Jewish/Christian spin-off religions (sects) claiming to have a “secret knowledge” of spiritual things beyond the accepted Scriptures.
- This “knowledge” was actually derived from a collection of other religions, notably Zoroastrianism.
- Shot-through with Platonic and Neo-Platonic assumptions and language.
- But then, so was Christianity.

Gnosticism and Christian Orthodoxy
- Gnosticism is incompatible with mainstream Christianity, but it was also informed by it, and both shared sources, and the distinction between gnosticism, and Christianity, is often difficult to make.
- The Church Father, Irenaeus, wrote the definitive work on the subject in the second century. It required four volumes of often elaborate argument to make the distinction. By Ficino’s day this work was virtually unknown.
- One Problem: “Dualism” — Good and Evil are equal principles in the Universe. Commonly connected with the idea that matter is either “evil” or “inferior” in comparison with the “good” or spiritual principle. (“pessimistic” and “optimistic” gnosticism differ on this.)
- Dualism is mild in the C.H. and Ficino did not notice it.

More on the C.H. and the Fathers:
- The Hermetic writings were also bolstered by the fact that they made statements very similar to those of genuine saints and Church Fathers of the early centuries of Christianity, whose works were being recovered.
- Athanasius of Alexandria: “God became man that man might become God.”
- Lactantius was not alone. Other undeniably Christian Fathers also gave Hermes high status: Cyril of Alexandria; Cyprian of Carthage; Tertullian; (and notably) Arnobius
- (Ficino could count himself in good company if the similarities outweighed the differences in his mind.)

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola
- (1463–1494)
- At the age of 23 (1486) began a project to “defend 900 theses” (“900 conclusions in every kind of science”) on religion, logic, natural philosophy, magic, ethics, etc.
- He was, himself, very interested in the mysterious Jewish magical writings called the Cabala, this was one of the essential keys to unifying all knowledge.
- 13 of Pico’s theses were declared “heretical” by the pope, and in 1488 he fled to France.
- Died on a pilgrimage at the age of 31, with his various projects uncompleted.

Marsiglio Ficino:
- (1433 – 1499)
- Hired by Cosimo d’ Medici to translate newly recovered works of Plato into Latin.
- Also charged with establishing a platonic “academy” in Florence.
- When the text of the Corpus Hermeticum was brought to Florence Ficino’s attention was turned toward translating it (with Cosimo’s full approval.)
- Also wrote extensively reconciling Christianity with Platonism and the Corpus Hermeticum.
Pico and Cabala

- Cabala -- Jewish mystical writings with roots in the second-temple period, also influenced by gnosticism, and Platonism.
- Pico believed them to be Moses’ own secret teaching (hence sharing antiquity with Hermes.)
- Like the C.H. the Cabala contained both philosophical and magical elements.
- The Hebrew Language is the Language of Power.
- Different levels of Spiritual beings may be contacted or commanded by the magus.

“Tree of Life”

Alchemy

- Not about “gold” but Transformation
- The goal of transforming one substance into another would be the ultimate command of nature - mastery of matter itself.
- Of course, it didn’t work (as they thought, they were performing standard chemical transformations and distillations).
- But, radioactive decay, anyone?

The Goal:

- Philosopher’s Stone: the “grail” of Alchemy -- a “perfect” substance which by virtue of its own purity is capable of transforming other substances (toward their own perfection.)
- Elixir of Life: A byproduct of the Stone, or possibly the Stone itself, which can reverse the earthly result of the Edenic Curse -- physical death. Perfect health is the product of the Elixir, as perfect material is the result of the Stone.

Man as Microcosm:

The World is primarily the totality of everything, consisting of heaven and earth (…). In the second mystical sense, however, it is appropriately identified as man. For as the world has grown out of four elements, so does man consist of four humours (…).

-- Isidore of Seville, A.D. 560-636
De Natura Rerum

Remember:

- Not everyone agreed that these arts and interpretations of the universe were valid or permissible from a Christian perspective.
- However, many of those who objected to certain ideas or practices were themselves adherents to others.
- There were those who objected to the whole package, sometimes for reasons which we use now, and sometimes because of reasons unique to their theology or aristotelian assumptions.
Genesis in the Alembic:
The Alchemist, according to the assumptions of late medieval and early modern Cosmology, regarded his work as being practiced along the pattern of God’s original Creation.
Often, for purposes of secrecy, Alchemical images were far more symbolic (as in Michael Maier’s *Atalanta Fugiens*):

**Astrology: Basic Assumptions**

- The Kosmos is a unified whole, all parts interacting with each other.
- All motion in the Cosmos descends from the Spiritual realm through the Outer Spheres to influence the realm of change. (In Aristotelian Astrology.)
- As the celestial realm is superior to the terrestrial, celestial beings (whether lifeless stars and planets, or the spirits they contain, or deities) wield influence over the terrestrial.
- As the celestial realm also operates in a predictable manner, the influence of the celestial realm on the rest of the cosmos may be predicted.
- As man is a “microcosm” or an analogy, for the whole scheme of the cosmos, there are always body parts, moods, and events in human existence which relate directly to their celestial counterparts, because they are analogous to them.
- Note: Astrology, because of the assumptions involved, is inherently Greek in origin.
Four Types of Astrology:

- Genethlialogy: The practice of casting a horoscope based on the specifics of any individual’s birth.
- General Astrology: The historical and predictable influence of the skies upon earthly events.
- Catarachic Astrology: Examining the heavens to determine proper, or better or worse, times for actions, especially significant ones. (Almanacs were common manuals of Catarachic Astrology.)
- Interrogatory Astrology: Answering very specific questions based upon the skies at the time of the question. (Not much practiced in Europe.)

Degrees of Astrological Influence

- One of the largest objections to astrology today is the assumption that it operates in a fatalistic world, in which one’s destiny is determined from birth.
- This was also the main objection in the medieval world, in that the form most often practiced was entirely deterministic: replacing God and free will with the stars.
- However, there was actually a spectrum of belief about the degree of influence which the skies had over earthly events:
  - At one end was pure determinism: the stars cannot be contradicted, especially as all motion descends through them.
  - In the middle were those who saw the influence of the skies as “directional” -- they were influences on life that should be heeded. Something like the weather -- think of the need to wear a coat in winter, or the difficulty of walking into a stiff wind.
  - A Variation on this posited that the skies were merely indicative of the divine will, hence making astrology a form of scripture -- this was not common among Christians, though some tried to make this argument.
- (At the other end of the spectrum were those who simply thought the whole business was bunk.)

Hermetic Astrology

- Less deterministic, in practice, than those forms which were more popular (and more condemned) in the medieval period.
- Posited that the planets were but an influence upon life, not inalterable.
- Rusted not so much upon the signs of the zodiac, but upon an intricate web of influences woven by the planets in their motions and relations to each other.
- The web was almost infinitely complex, but it was also mathematically describable.
- Adding to the complexity was that the planets, conceived as spiritual beings themselves, were not influencing the earth directly, but through “demonic” messengers -- earth spirits, and other spiritual beings.
- At any stage the system could be influenced via sympathetic magic -- balancing, one influence against another.
- What these beings were was a matter of hot debate: If they were “demons” in the Christian sense, then controlling them might be evil, but influencing them might not be. If they were mere creatures of a separate, spiritual dimension, then they could be manipulated even as humans manipulate cattle, dogs, etc.
- The general consensus was that the spiritual beings were not to be messed with, but no one was to be prohibited from looking out for their best interests.