who compiled information in late antiquity on the various schools of ancient Scepticism, provided a much fuller account. When the works of Sextus and Diogenes were recovered and read alongside texts as familiar as Cicero's *Academica*, a new energy stirred in philosophy; by Montaigne's time, Scepticism was powerful enough to become a major force in the Renaissance heritage prepared for Descartes and his successors.[15]

The Renaissance resurrected not only whole texts but also fragmentary material from a wide variety of sources which allowed scholars of the time to sketch—albeit very incompletely—outlines of philosophical opinion otherwise not well delineated. Because no original Greek Stoic survived on a Platonic or Aristotelian scale, for example, one had to go to Diogenes, Galen, or Sextus to learn the logic of Chrysippus, or to Cicero, Plutarch, and Seneca to discover the ethical teachings of Zeno. For some of the most innovative and influential ancient philosophers, not only Stoics but also pre-Socratics, Epicureans, Sceptics, Neoplatonists and others, the process was the same. Since the Renaissance had to discover or rediscover the tools of philology and history needed for such detective work, the pioneering labours of obscure humanist scholars—Gentian Hervet, who translated Sextus, or Willem Canter, who first published a Greek text of the *Eclogae* of Stobaeus—certainly deserve our memory and admiration. It was they who first edited, organized, translated, printed, and disseminated the philosophical remains of antiquity that succeeding centuries have come to take for granted. If Thales and his successors were the fathers of Western philosophy, the humanist scholars of the Renaissance were the midwives of its rebirth in a classical form.

Philosophy in a Renaissance context

What should the Renaissance mean to us? The French word means rebirth, and when the Swiss art historian Jacob Burckhardt applied it more than a century ago to the period of our inquiry, he meant to suggest that the warm sun of Italian culture had revived learning, statecraft, and the arts after a dormant millennium in Europe's cold Gothic tomb. The geographical and chronological reference of the term has expanded since Burckhardt's day, until now it extends to most of Europe from the early fourteenth to the early seventeenth century, but its use is still strongly coloured by Burckhardt's original interests, which today we would call art history, intellectual history, and cultural history. Even Burckhardt's memorable conception of the Renaissance city-state as 'a work of art' implies a different sense of the political order from what is conveyed in the great categories—mainly political categories—that distinguish ancient, medieval, and modern times. If the common image of Western history is a panorama of states and wars, the usual tableau of the Renaissance looks somewhat different: the props include paintings, buildings, books, and, suffusing the whole, the bright light of a less concrete mentality expressed in terms like "individualism" or 'the dignity of man'. Machiavelli and Cesare Borgia fascinated Burckhardt as political agents of solitary genius, but he was also dazzled by the romances of Boccaccio, the paintings of Leonardo, and the polymath brilliance of Leon Battista Alberti. It was in painters and poets as much as in princes and diplomats that Burckhardt detected the values that created the modern world and marked the end of the Middle Ages. His Renaissance brought with it not only secularism and individualism but also new expressions of style and original patterns of thought, including philosophical thought. Though he admitted some continuity between medieval and modern times, he stressed what seemed to him most discontinuous with the proximate past, looking ahead to the innovations of modernity rather than backward to what endured from the Middle Ages. Thus, he treated the individualist morality of the Renaissance as a great novelty, a defining feature of modernity, and undervalued the debt of Renaissance thinkers to their ancient, early Christian, and medieval predecessors. Burckhardt's conception of the Renaissance has been controversial but enormously influential, leading

[15] Below, Ch. 4, nn. 56–9.

other historians to replay his themes in an amazing array of variations.[16]

Philosophy as such had little to do with Burckhardt's conception of the period. That he paid small attention to the common practice of philosophers in the Renaissance is unsurprising, since what remained central for them was part of the very thing against which he defined his new cultural ideal—the lively tradition of philosophy invented in the medieval universities and sustained in early modern Europe in forms more congenial to Abelard or Albertus than to Hobbes or Hume. Inasmuch as Burckhardt set out to write a broad 'essay' on intellectual and cultural history, what he says about so technical a subject as philosophy is meagre. Moreover, both in his day and in the Renaissance, 'philosophy' meant something different from what it does now. In the medieval and early modern periods, philosophers were expected to master not just logic, moral philosophy, and metaphysics but also a range of subjects now considered disciplines of the natural sciences. Close institutional and intellectual ties also kept the philosopher in touch with medicine, theology, history, rhetoric, grammar, and other fields. The compass of twentieth-century philosophy, especially in the Anglo-American tradition, has narrowed; even within the university, most people who read philosophy in any depth are practitioners, and the broader educational influence of the discipline is confined to a corner of the curriculum. Philosophy no longer plays a large part in the pedagogic formation of an educated public in the English-speaking world, but things were very different in the Renaissance. To have a university education meant encountering philosophy as a prominent part of the curriculum, which in turn required reading a variety of ancient and medieval texts. Even people without a systematic university education could be well versed in philosophical subjects, sometimes as a matter

[16] Garin (1938); Ferguson (1948: 179–204); Keller (1957); Kristeller (1972*b*: 24; 1981; 1982; 1985*d*; 1985*e*: 3–23; 1990*a*: 2–3, 20–4; 1990*b*); Trinkaus (1970; 1983: 343–403); Di Napoli (1973: 31–84); Burke (1974: 14, 20–6, 239, 275–6); Sozzi (1982); Burckhardt (1990).

of amateur acquaintance, sometimes as a mark of real expertise. If the term 'Renaissance philosophy' is to have any historical meaning, one must admit such differences. It will not do simply to extract issues from the past that may bear on twentieth-century problems and then to treat a collection of such topics as history. Presentism can only distort our sense of the past, just as antiquarianism deprives the past of a living voice. The point is to learn how philosophy worked in the Renaissance as a period with a distinct historical identity, and then, having met Renaissance philosophers on their own terms, to appreciate their work as valuable in its own right before trying to trace its influence or weigh its utility in our time.

Since Burckhardt published his great book, debate about the meaning and value of the term 'Renaissance' has been continuous and copious. Without rehearsing these controversies, we will apply the word to European history from the early fourteenth to the early seventeenth century, avoiding any prior commitment to a stronger sense of the term than this chronological use. At the start, we will try to carry little of the usual baggage about 'the discovery of the world and of man' and other broad conceptions familiar from textbook accounts of the Renaissance—even though some of them may be well justified in the end. Our task, in other words, is to describe and evaluate philosophy as practised and read in early modern Europe, recognizing that the colourless phrase 'early modern' refers roughly to the same period imbued with much brighter tones by the word 'Renaissance'. Whatever words we choose, we must insist at all points on the historicity of the philosophy of the period, its development in a particular context of intellectual, social, economic, political, and other forces that shaped its distinct historical identity.

Among the major events and movements of the early modern period, a few stand out for their special relevance to the history of philosophy, and some—the religious and political changes that shook church and state in Europe during the same centuries when humanism transformed her culture—are important enough to require extensive treatment below. Here,

we may begin by noting the enormous impact of the invention of printing in movable type.[17] The first book produced by this revolutionary technology appeared about the middle of the fifteenth century, and the first philosophical text was published around 1470. From that time until our own day, the printing press became Europe's chief instrument of learned communication. Within thirty years of 1470, for example, about seven hundred books relating to Aristotle were printed, and during the same period Marsilio Ficino brought a complete Latin Plato into circulation, evidence of a quickening pace of publication that accelerated throughout the next century, when thousands of editions of philosophical books saw the light. Manuscript production did not cease entirely; handwritten texts of some philosophical books considered dangerous or suspect continued to circulate, while dedication copies and lecture notes remained in manuscript for different reasons. In general, however, print became the dominant medium, making books cheaper for all and speeding the circulation of new and old ideas alike. Publishers were an industry of subversives when they disseminated the tracts of Luther or the treatises of Machiavelli, but they also increased the weight of ancient and medieval tradition when they printed Aristotle or Aquinas in a form more accessible, more convenient, and more accurate than anything that literate people had ever before enjoyed.

As the world of learning expanded with the growing reach of the printed word, the world of experience widened in broader and bolder voyages of exploration, whose repercussions in the philosopher's study were unexpectedly great.[18] Discoveries of new lands and peoples shattered the space in which Plato and Aristotle had lived and thought, breaking the narrower boundaries that they naturally took as a framework for natural and moral philosophy. An especially urgent question was whether the people of the New World were as human as Europeans or

[17] Butler (1940); Goldschmidt (1943); Bühler (1960; 1973); Febvre and Martin (1971); Ullman and Stadter (1972); Hirsch (1974; 1978; 1980); Gerulaitis (1976); Lowry (1979); Eisenstein (1980); Grendler (1984); Chartier (1987).

[18] Parry (1966); below, pp. 112–16, 253–60, 274–8, 299–300.

perhaps some strange and lower kind. This question screamed through sixteenth-century Spain, and it still echoed in philosophical discussions of human equality and slavery after the founders of the United States drafted their Constitution. The new discoveries also raised questions about the scope of man's ingenuity in exploring and then exploiting the human condition as part of this novel experience of nature, another Renaissance discovery whose effects are still with us, for better or for worse.

Historians give the name 'Scientific Revolution' to another series of discoveries on a different frontier; they occurred mostly in the seventeenth century and hence largely outside the scope of a book about the Renaissance. But some of the new science had its roots in our earlier period.[19] The year 1543 saw the publication not only of the epochal work of Nicolaus Copernicus *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* but also of Vesalius' magnificent volume *On the Structure of the Human Body*, texts that transformed the sciences of astronomy and anatomy. Less spectacular efforts of physicians, natural historians, mathematicians, and others led to progress in zoology, botany, mechanics, mathematics, and various applications of what we now call 'science', and what the Renaissance called 'natural philosophy'. The very terminology implies that these new scientific achievements would have caught the attention of philosophers, when Vesalius, Copernicus and others held the ancient macrocosms and microcosms of Plato and Aristotle up to the mirror of contemporary speculation and experience. Even though many Peripatetics wished to dismiss or ignore such novelties as irrelevant and impertinent, proponents of Aristotelian physical science had eventually to confront the new claims, if only to refute them. Not many were as fixed in their recalcitrance as Cesare Cremonini, remembered as the man who refused to look through Galileo's telescope. When he observed a new star in 1572, the more inquisitive Tycho Brahe saw trouble in the changeless heavens of the *De*

[19] For a review of current opinion on the Scientific Revolution, see Lindberg and Westman (1990); see also Trinkaus (1983: 140–68).

caelo (*On the Heavens*) and set a strenuous empirical test for Aristotelian physics and cosmology. At the same time, discoveries in biology and medicine penetrated the standard treatments of life, perception, and cognition which had accumulated for centuries under the rubric of Aristotle's *De anima* (*On the Soul*). By the end of the sixteenth century, major battles had been fought in the war between Aristotelians and innovators—*Peripatetici* against *novatores*—and they continued through the next hundred years. Galileo brought the conflict to a head in 1632 with his *Dialogue on the Two Great World Systems, Ptolemaic and Copernican*, but his ecclesiastical defeat and moral victory by no means settled the struggle.

Humanism

In his most provocative book even the adventurous Galileo took an ancient text, Ptolemy's *Almagest*, as his point of departure; at least to this extent, the Florentine rebel showed himself loyal to the humanist habits of Renaissance intellectuals. So far as philosophy is concerned, humanism was the key cultural phenomenon of early modern Europe. The word 'humanism' has been the subject of much learned controversy in our time, both because it was a coinage of the nineteenth century, not a term used by Renaissance people, and also because in some contexts it connotes an aggressive anthropocentric secularism quite foreign to the Christian world of early modern Europe. None the less, the word has proved useful, perhaps indispensable, in describing central and distinctive features of early modern culture.[20] No neat definition of

[20] Current conceptions of Renaissance humanism derive mainly from the work of P. O. Kristeller; see Kristeller (1956: 11–15, 261–78, 553–83; 1961*a*: 3–23, 92–119; 1964*a*: 147–65; 1972*a*; 1974: 3–25; 1985*e*: 111–27; 1988*b*; 1988*c*); 1990*a*: 1–88); see also Sabbadini (1922); Toffanin (1929; 1964); Campana (1946); Weiss (1947; 1949; 1964; 1967); Garin (1965*a*; 1967*a*); Bouwsma (1973); Ullmann (1977); Witt (1982; 1988); Trinkaus (1983: 3–31, 52–139; 1988*a*); Perreiah (1982); Overfield (1984); Grafton and Jardine (1986). Rabil (1988) is a 3-volume collection of current scholarship on humanism; especially relevant to this volume are the contributions by D'Amico, Geanakoplos, Grafton, Kristeller, Monfasani, Percival, Ruderman, Santoro, Trinkaus, and Witt. See also above, n. 10.

humanism will be meaningful, especially as applied over several centuries of intellectual development, but its ancestry can be traced to classical times. Cicero and other ancient authors used such expressions as *studia humanitatis* and *litterae humaniores* to describe a liberal education centred on authoritative texts in Greek and Latin that taught grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. In Italy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the urge quickened to revive ancient culture as a model for contemporary life, the first people to be called 'humanists' studied and taught Latin and eventually Greek texts in those subjects. Cicero, Horace, Livy, Ovid, Priscian, Quintilian, Seneca, and Virgil were prominent among the ancient authors who first interested the humanists. As knowledge of Greek became more common, they turned their attention to Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Isocrates, and other Greek authorities. A curriculum grounded in such writers naturally had more to do with linguistic, literary, and historical issues than with philosophical problems, least of all with those questions that fell outside the province of moral philosophy.[21]

As a distinctive feature of medieval Latin culture, humanism first emerged in the (by medieval standards) increasingly secular world of Northern Italy; in particular, lay notaries who rose in the ranks of town and chancery and law teachers who organized new universities were important advocates of early humanism. In eleventh-century Pavia and twelfth-century Bologna, new interest in Roman law stimulated curiosity about the ancient world, and the rise of an urban economy helped liberate the classics from the old grammar curriculum of the cathedral schools and the sole dominion of the church. The *ars dictaminis*, which crafted letters by applying Cicero's rhetoric to written rather than spoken language, began in the great Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino in the late eleventh

[21] Cicero, *For Archias the Poet* 1. 1–4; *On the Orator* 1. 4. 13; *Familiar Letters* 11. 27. 6; *On the Republic* 1. 17. 28; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 13. 17. 19. 14. 1–5; Marrou (1956: 98–9, 217–26); Kristeller (1961*a*: 8–11; 1990*a*: 3–5). On humanism and history, see Garin (1954: 192–210); Buck (1957); Burke (1970); Huppert (1970); Kelley (1970*a*; 1970*b*; 1984; 1988); Struever (1970); Hay (1977); Cochrane (1981); Fryde (1983).