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0521572762 - Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought

Joel Kaye

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A cluster of intellectual innovations appearing within scholastic natural philosophy in the fourteenth century played a critical role in the future development of scientific thought. Beneath these innovations lay a profound reconceptualization of nature. This book attempts to analyze the components of this reconceptualization and to uncover the pressures and concerns that shaped it. To do so, it looks both within the university and beyond it, to the monetized society that surrounded and supported it. It argues that the transformation of the conceptual model of the natural world within scholastic natural philosophy c. 1260–1380 was directly linked to the social and economic process of monetization that transformed European society over this same period. It illustrates how those perceptual shifts essential to the emergence of modern scientific thought – the shifts toward quantification, geometric representation, multiplication, relativity, probability, mechanistic order, and dynamic equilibrium – were grounded in the experience and comprehension of monetized society.

The book's earlier chapters analyze scholastic writings on economic questions (particularly those found in commentaries on Aristotle's discussion of exchange in *Nicomachean Ethics* v.5), focussing on the six new categories of analysis and description devised by philosophers to make sense of their experience of monetized society. The concluding chapters investigate the transmission of philosophical insights from the comprehension of the monetized marketplace to the comprehension and construction of nature. They reveal how intellectual developments pioneered within each of the six new categories of economic analysis lie at the base of the most forward-looking conceptual advances within scholastic natural philosophy – advances that proved to be crucial to the further development of scientific thought.

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*Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series*

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# ECONOMY AND NATURE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

*Money, market exchange,  
and the emergence of scientific thought*

JOEL KAYE

*Barnard College*



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