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The Renaissance, known primarily for the art and literature that it produced, was also a period in which philosophical thought flourished. This two-volume anthology contains forty new translations of important works on moral and political philosophy written during the Renaissance and hitherto unavailable in English. The anthology is designed to be used in conjunction with *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy,* in which all of these texts are discussed.

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VOLUME II: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Edited by

JILL KRAYE
The Warburg Institute

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Translators

D. Catherine Brown, Late of the Department of History, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

Brian P. Copenhaver, Department of History, UCLA

Martin Davies, Incunabula, British Library, London

Alison Holcroft, Department of Classics, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Neil Kenny, Churchill College, Cambridge

A. S. McGrade, Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut (Storrs)

David Marsh, Department of Italian, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

John Monfasani, Department of History, The University at Albany, SUNY, Albany

Russell Price, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Lancaster

J. A. Trentman, Huron College, London, Ontario

Nicholas Webb, Open University, Milton Keynes

Ronald G. Witt, Department of History, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina

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Preface

The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy (*CHRP*), published in 1988, attempted to draw attention to the richness of philosophical production in the period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The editors (Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler and myself) made a point of including within the scope of the volume the wide range of disciplines which in the Renaissance were regarded as part of philosophy: not only those fields which still constitute the core of the philosophical curriculum, such as logic and epistemology, but also subjects which are no longer classified as philosophy, such as natural science, psychology and rhetoric. The aim was to document and analyse the contributions made in this era to all these subjects, and in this way to put Renaissance philosophy on the map.

Not all fields of Renaissance philosophy, however, have suffered equally from the general neglect that *CHRP* was designed to remedy. One which has maintained a remarkably high profile is political philosophy. While in histories of Western philosophy the period from 1300 to 1600 is often passed over, or given only perfunctory and superficial treatment, no account of the development of political thought would be considered complete without at least one lengthy chapter devoted to these centuries. Any study of the formation of the modern science of politics must find a place for the contrasting approaches of Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas More. The centrality of the roles played by the Italian city-states (especially Florence and Venice), the conciliarist movement and the Reformation is also beyond dispute.

Yet, for all the importance assigned to Renaissance political thought, only a small number of texts have been studied intensively. English translations of well-known books such as *The Prince* and *Utopia* have long been available; and these works, together with treatises written in English such as Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governor,* have received the lion's share of attention from English-speaking scholars and students. The aim of this volume is to make possible a broader and more accurate picture of Renaissance political philosophy by publishing seventeen new translations. The texts have been selected from among those discussed by Quentin Skinner in his chapter on 'Political philosophy' in *CHRP.* An anthology of Renaissance political philosophy which does not include Machiavelli's *The Prince* runs the risk of being compared to a production of *Hamlet* without the prince. It is to be hoped, however, that the benefit provided by a substantial increase in the amount of material available to an Anglophone readership will outweigh any disadvantages caused by the absence of works which can be readily found elsewhere. In order to

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make it as easy as possible for readers to locate published translations, a bibliography of Renaissance political philosophy texts available in English has been supplied.

As in *CHRP,* a broad view of Renaissance philosophy has been taken in this volume. Scholastic as well as humanist works, vernacular texts as well as Latin ones, have been included. A large proportion of the works derive from an Italian context, but northern European political thought is also well represented. Although many texts have been translated in their entirety, it was not possible, due to constraints of space, to have complete versions of all the works in the volume. Where it has been necessary to translate only part of a particular text, priority has been given to those passages discussed in *CHRP.* Each translation is annotated and has been provided with a brief introduction, as well as a list of further reading, so that the book, although intended primarily as a companion volume to *CHRP,* can also be used on its own.

Given that the aim of this anthology is to make inaccessible texts accessible to a wide public, it would be failing in one of its main duties if the translations, while faithful, were so literal that they did not read well in English. I have therefore encouraged (browbeaten, some might say) the translators to strive for maximum readability. That said, it is by no means possible – or desirable – to translate all Renaissance texts in the same style. An attempt has therefore been made to capture the difference, for instance, between the formulaic and rather stilted Latin of scholastic authors such as Jacques Almain and the fluid and rhetorical Latin of humanists such as Josse Clichtove. Where a particular word or phrase has proved especially difficult to translate or the translation chosen might be regarded as controversial, the original is given afterwards in square brackets. Insertions on the part of the translator are also placed in square brackets; omissions are indicated by an ellipsis. All quotations from the Bible are taken from the Revised Version, and its numeration of chapter and verses has been followed (even when this differs from the original Vulgate citation).

I am immensely grateful to the translators who contributed to this volume. All of them were faced, at one time or another, with awkward textual, philosophical and historical problems. Many, in addition, had to work from uncritical and unannotated Renaissance editions. Collaborating with the various translators, I have acquired some new friends (though in some cases our communication has been conducted entirely through postal, telephonic and electronic channels) and strengthened some old bonds. Despite occasional moments of irritation – both on my part and that of the translators – it has been an enjoyable and, I hope, useful enterprise. I am particularly indebted to one of the translators, Martin Davies. An experienced editor himself, he gave helpful advice on a range of linguistic and stylistic matters, performing with commendable generosity and patience the thankless role of husband of the editor.

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