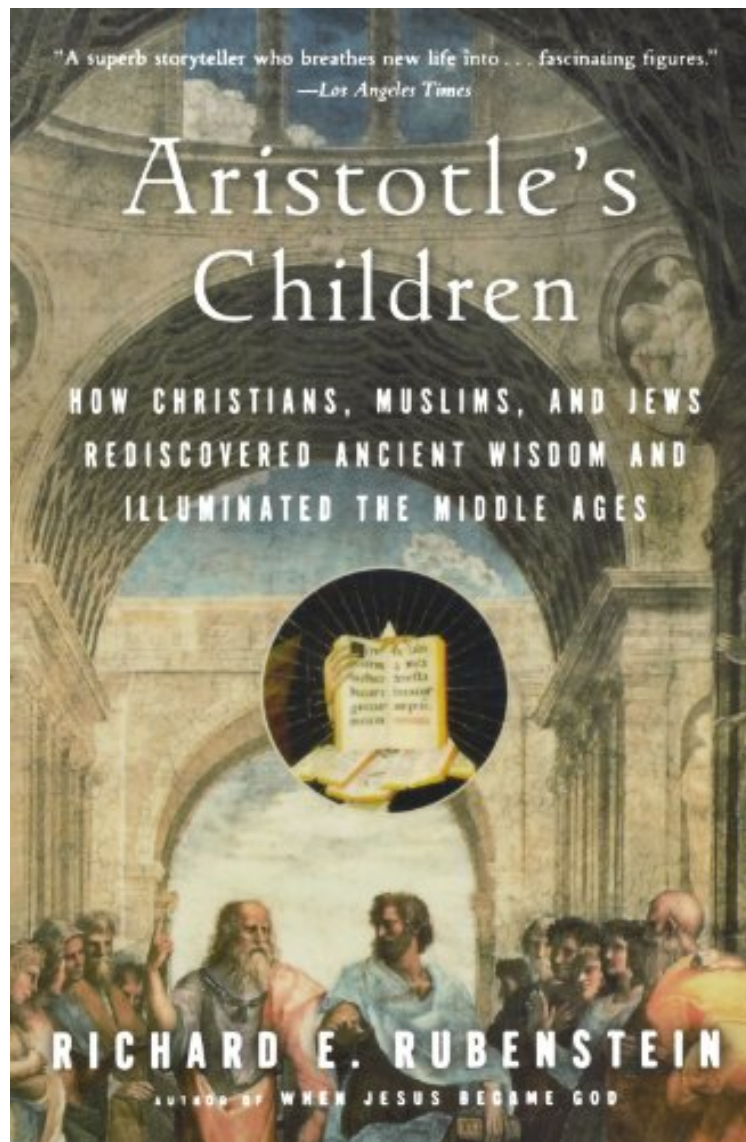


(Get free) Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Middle Ages

Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Middle Ages

Richard E. Rubenstein
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Richard E. Rubenstein : Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Middle Ages before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth

my time, and all praised Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Middle Ages:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Elegant interaction: ideas and society shaping each other
By J Michael Petersen
I believe this book can be appreciated by anyone interested in the history of ideas. The more you know about the subject matter of ancient/medieval philosophy the more you can appreciate the author's subtlety and depth. His forte is revealing the vibrant interactions of these ideas and the societies that shunned or accepted them. The Byzantine empire closed the Academy in Athens--Islam embraced and transmitted philosophy back to the Western world. Then, Islam shunned philosophy in the 12th century. Back in the Christian World, they sparked a creative tension, a project called the "unity of faith and reason". It blossomed into the Medieval Renaissance of the 13th century. It laid a foundation for scientific inquiry inspired by cosmic order. The Church poured vast resources into the project as a demonstration of natural theology, how God does reveal His purpose through the order of the natural world. Without the confidence of faith, these ideas may have remained "stillborn". Yet they grew to fruition within the social fabric of the Church and its universities. The 14th century saw the dissolution of the "faith and reason" project. This coincided with economic upheavals and the Black Death. By this time both faith and reason could hold forth independently. Much can be gained by revisiting and re-evaluating this fruitful tension in our world today.
I am puzzled about the author's preface. He poses a peculiar caveat regarding his subject matter, which he obviously doesn't really have?
6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. An enjoyable and worthwhile book though not as in-depth as I'd been lead to hope by the subtitle.
By Ashby Manson
An interesting if ultimately unsatisfying book. The focus is primarily on how various Christian scholastics worked through Aristotle's ideas. Disappointingly little time is spent on the purported substance of Jewish and Muslim contributions. They are portrayed primarily as conduits though their comments on Aristotle are mentioned in passing. The book is largely a sweeping history composed of the author's summaries of source material. Very few actual quotes. This is surprising as many of the thinkers being discussed wrote sparkling prose. One is left with the suspicion that there are about 100 pages of missing source material that the publisher did not wish to pay to reproduce. Also largely missing is a deeper perspective on what was happening in the world of politics technology economics in the world around these thinkers. Strange, as the applied science aspect of Aristotle must have had ongoing repercussions and positive incentives in the wider society. (Optics and the invention of eyeglasses/lenses etc.)
Medieval philosophy as ideological cage match. Franciscans and Dominicans and Heretics: GO!
The book covers the bad behavior of the Christians (burning heretics at the stake, putting entire heretical provinces to the sword, etc.) but arguably downplays the horrors. It is surely not an exhaustive list of the crimes of the inquisitions fanatics. Rubenstein is attempting to sell an updated medieval Aristotelian dialogue and analysis as a means to solve our modern conflicts driven by the continuing schism between faith and reason. A bit hard to swallow when being a creative thinker was likely to get you impaled or burned at the stake (or placed under house arrest if you were lucky) rather than a Nobel prize. Again and again you see reactionary factions within the church attempting to quash novel ways of thinking. Fortunately competing power centers (secular rulers pursuing their own power or sometimes tolerant provinces) provided safe havens for some of these thinkers and their novel ideas once they had lost their political supporters within the church. Arguably the spread of literacy and reading materials made it impossible for the church to burn evidence of new ideas rapidly enough to expunge the accumulating heresies. Some of the chapters make you wish Google could sneak someone into the vatican and scan all the old records surrounding heresy trials so we could see whether there are any remnants of the missing thoughts that got books and writers eliminated.
The book's argument comes together in an interesting way when you see alternative schools of religious thought all competing using Aristotelian logic and almost accidentally creating the necessary pre-conditions of modern this worldly science. With the work of Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, the Aristotelian revolution took a radically new turn. The Franciscan innovators greatly admired Aristotle's genius, but they rejected certain ideas of his that Aquinas had considered indispensable and focused attention on others that he had downplayed or ignored. Where there had been one Aristotle recognized by medieval Christian thinkers, now there were two. The result was a split in the Aristotelian movement which opened a great gap between faith and reason, religious experience and scientific evidence. Rubenstein mentions in passing that rabbinical study of the Torah has avoided the oppressive anti-modern push back exhibited by the Christian church hierarchy (supporting his thesis that a more fruitful rapprochement between faith and reason is possible) but fails to analyze the intellectual mechanisms involved in that modernizing dialogue. Is it possible that reactionary forces within Judaism have simply not been politically powerful enough to be oppressive due to their minority status in most political systems? Hard to say when he doesn't bother to expand.
An enjoyable and worthwhile book though not as in-depth as I'd been lead to hope by the subtitle.
10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Aristotle's Children in current perspective.
By Gene C. Bammel
GNPR XXVIII: "Aristotle's Children." A good book review should accomplish two things: it should accurately summarize the basic themes of the book, and it should help the reader determine if they need to read the book.
Richard E. Rubenstein's Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Dark Ages is a great book, which will richly reward all those who read it. The last chapter, "Aristotle and the Modern

World," is alone worth the price of admission, being a brilliant statement of how a balance between faith and reason, so critical to today's global problems, might be restored, if only we could re-awaken the great Aristotelian vision. The book is a superb study of how Aristotelian wisdom developed, was lost, and then rediscovered in the Middle Ages, initially by Moslem scholars, then by Jews, and finally by Christians. The book's principal weakness is that while it is long on medieval Christian philosophy, it skips too lightly over the Moslem sages, from Al-Farabi to Al-Ghazzal, and does not give Moses Maimonides, the greatest of medieval Jewish sages, nearly the attention he deserves. There are, however, good reasons for the selections Rubenstein has made. The Christian writers had the advantage of the Herculean labors of their predecessors, and not only did Christian teaching benefit from seeing how a variety of philosophical and theological problems had been formulated by Moslems and Jews, they also had the benefit of seeing how proposed solutions had fared in the various marketplaces of ideas. Rubenstein also wishes to focus on how the medieval synthesis of religion and science, faith and reason, fell apart, and this happened most visibly in the hands of Christian philosophers like William of Ockham. William epitomizes the ills that befell Moslem and Jewish philosophy. Here is Rubenstein's summary: "(Ockham) liked to argue that God could, if he wished, condemn the innocent and reward the guilty, or make two solid objects occupy the same place at the same time. The point was to demonstrate that God's absolute freedom and power are not limited by our notions of justice or common sense." (p. 260). The point of Rubenstein's book is that it is always a mistake to give up on the power of human reason. Does this put him in the camp of those who say faith has had its day, and scientific rationalism precludes all religious views? Hardly. Without being nostalgic for the Middle Ages, Rubenstein suggests that it is once again time for rationalist thinkers and people of faith to engage each other in a "continuous dialogue productive of new insights for both sides." Far from the pessimism that has prevailed in the aftermath of Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*, Rubenstein asserts that a return to the healthy Aristotelian vision offers a favorable pathway into a much better future. "The West's destiny, it seems clear, is to become part of a diverse, yet integrated global civilization." (p. 291). Other books may do a better job of illuminating certain parts of the medieval heritage, but no other book is as good at pointing to the current relevance of the Medieval Synthesis to our current dilemmas. Rubenstein is professor of Conflict Resolution at George Mason University, and this book is a superb expression of how Conflict Resolution might be applied to our most current and pressing problems. This is a brilliant book. If you choose to read it, do not be put off by the lengthy analysis of the development and decline of Christian theology in the Middle Ages. Every single fact fits into the crossword puzzle of the solution proposed in the final chapter. This is a brilliant book, and you should read it.

Europe was in the long slumber of the Middle Ages, the Roman Empire was in tatters, and the Greek language was all but forgotten, until a group of twelfth-century scholars rediscovered and translated the works of Aristotle. His ideas spread like wildfire across Europe, offering the scientific view that the natural world, including the soul of man, was a proper subject of study. The rediscovery of these ancient ideas sparked riots and heresy trials, caused major upheavals in the Catholic Church, and also set the stage for today's rift between reason and religion. In *Aristotle's Children*, Richard Rubenstein transports us back in history, rendering the controversies of the Middle Ages lively and accessible--and allowing us to understand the philosophical ideas that are fundamental to modern thought.

From Publishers Weekly
In 12th-century Toledo, in Spain, a group of Christian monks, Jewish sages and Muslim teachers gathered to study a new translation of Aristotle's *De Anima* (On the Soul). In Rubenstein's dazzling historical narrative, this moment represents both the tremendous influence of Aristotle on these three religions and the culmination of the medieval rediscovery of his writings. In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle fashioned a new system of philosophy, focusing on the material world, whose operations he explained by a series of causes. As Rubenstein (*When Jesus Became God*) explains, in the second and third centuries A.D., Western Christian scholars suppressed Aristotle's teachings, believing that his emphasis on reason and the physical world challenged their doctrines of faith and God's supernatural power. By the seventh century, Muslims had begun to discover Aristotle's writings. Islamic thinkers such as Avicenna and Averroes, in the 11th and 12 centuries, embraced Aristotle's rationalist philosophy and principles of logic. Christian theologians rediscovered Aristotle through the commentaries of the monk Boethius, who argued in the sixth century that reason and understanding were essential elements of faith. There resulted a tremendous ferment in the study of Aristotle in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, culminating in the work of Thomas Aquinas, who used Aristotle's notion of an Unmoved Mover and First Cause to construct his arguments for God's existence. Aquinas, too, argued that reason was a necessary component of faith's ability to understand God and the world. Although the book purports to trace Aristotle's influence on Christianity, Islam and Judaism, it devotes more attention to Christianity. Even so, Rubenstein's lively prose, his lucid insights and his crystal-clear historical analyses make this a first-rate study in the history of ideas. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From School Library Journal
Adult/High School--This is a challenging, intricate book for mature students who are fascinated by the paradox of the Middle Ages: How was the knowledge of Greece and Rome lost, and how was it found again? To set the scene, Rubenstein provides an introduction to the lives and works of Plato and Aristotle, and to the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West. He then shifts his focus to the year 1136, when a group of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian

scholars working together in Toledo began translating the philosopher's forgotten works. The dissemination of those translations sent shock waves through Europe as religious leaders tried to reconcile Aristotle's scientific theories with Church doctrine. The struggles between secular rulers and the Church hierarchy, and the development of the medieval universities, are presented with rich detail and feeling. The author shows readers the similarities between those conflicts and the Darwinist/creationist clashes. Students researching topics on the Middle Ages will find this title a useful reference source. Multiple pages are devoted to the lives and works of important figures, such as Abelard, Aquinas, and Innocent II, but the author does not neglect the less well known, such as William of Ockham or Siger de Brabant. Religious orders, heretical movements, and philosophical works are equally well covered. This is a compelling account of how the rediscovery of the writings of Aristotle changed the way the Western world looked at humans, God, and nature.--Kathy Tewell, Chantilly Regional Library, VA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From Library JournalRubinstein's background as a professor of conflict resolution must have come in handy as he was crafting this tale of one of history's biggest conflagrations: the introduction of Aristotle's philosophy to the Churchbound Europe of the Middle Ages. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.