Some years ago an article appeared in *Philosophical Review* by Ernest A. Moody entitled: *Empiricism and Metaphysics in Medieval Philosophy.*¹ The general thesis of Professor Moody's paper was that late medieval philosophy—specifically the late 13th and 14th centuries—is distinguished by a shift from speculative metaphysics to an epistemological and logical criticism of metaphysics. The same philosophical problems are discussed, but there is a methodological shift from speculation to analysis. With this methodological shift there comes also an empirical attitude which is likened by Professor Moody to the positivism of the twentieth century, and, indeed, has been called by another scholar, "Christian Positivism".² Although this shift has been labeled by many historians as the "decline of scholasticism",³ Moody argues that it "gave a new character and direction to all later philosophy" ⁴ and, we might add, showed medieval philosophy at its most critical and original.

Since Professor Moody's article much research has been done by both American and European scholars which bears out his thesis. Indeed, it can now be asserted, without exaggeration, that the philosophical thinking of the fourteenth century is characteristically critical and analytic, with much less dependence upon Aristotelian speculation than any previous century. Professor John Murdoch has argued recently that one can isolate definite modes of analysis (he

* A shorter version of this paper was read at the Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, May 5, 1975.


² The term is due to Pierre Duhem, *Système du Monde*, Paris, vol. 4 (1916), e.g., pp. 313-316; and vol. 6 (1954), e.g., pp. 715-717, 729. Although Duhem's term is a conscious description of the kind of analytic approach indigenous to the fourteenth century, he could not have been consciously comparing the fourteenth century to the movement of logical positivism.

³ As examples of this view, Moody quotes the histories of Frank Thilly and Etienne Gilson. See Moody, op. cit., pp. 147, 148.

calls them "languages of analysis") characteristic of a great number of fourteenth century philosophers. These "languages of analysis" are primarily logical tools (e.g. the theories of suppositio and significatio which are medieval counterparts to modern theories of meaning and reference) which are utilised not only upon purely philosophical problems, but also upon theological and scientific problems.

Although much work has been done on the new methodology of the fourteenth century, needless to say there remains a great deal of work yet to do. In this paper I hope to add one small contribution to this continuing research. Rather than talk in a general way about the philosophical methods of the two thinkers mentioned in the title of this paper, I have chosen to present a very small segment of a debate between them (and, we might add, from the point of view of speculative metaphysics, not a very profound debate) which will show, hopefully in a more interesting way, the kind of argumentation and analysis which went on in the fourteenth century.

One further general point ought to be made. Although there is a decided methodological shift in the fourteenth century from speculation to criticism and analysis, it is still a hallmark of medieval philosophy that this criticism and analysis almost always (but, notably, not always) occurs within a theological context; i.e. the purely logical and analytic tools are generally used upon and arise out of a theological context. Conversely, however, theological and scriptural beliefs often give rise to new critical and purely philosophic insights. In the words of one historian of medieval philosophy, "Philosophy did exist in the period from the first to the fifteenth century, not merely in spite of, but also because of the religious traditions in which it developed". The debate between Rimini and the Black Monk is an interesting example, I think, of this interaction between theology and philosophy in the fourteenth century. It is not now, of course, an interaction which shows philosophy as a handmaid of theology (if philosophy were ever merely that in the Middle Ages), but rather an interaction which shows theology as a kind of stepping stone to the discovery of philosophic insights. Indeed, theology seems now in the fourteenth century almost a subterfuge for philosophy. It is nothing

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6 Julius R. Weinberg, A Short History of Medieval Philosophy, Princeton 1964 p. 3.