

## Marsilius of Inghen

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Marsilius of Inghen (b. ca. 1340; d. 1396) was born in Nijmegen (Low Countries) and died in Heidelberg. In 1362 he became master of arts at the University of Paris. In 1379 he left Paris and reappeared in 1386 at Heidelberg as master of arts and first rector of the university. Shortly before he died, he finished his theological studies, which he had begun in 1366 at Paris.

Marsilius wrote logical treatises and commentaries on Aristotle (*Organon*, *Physica*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *Metaphysica*), the Bible, and the *Sentences* of PETER LOMBARD. His writings survive in a large number of manuscripts, and some were printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Marsilius had a large personal library, with 237 volumes containing scholastic writings and treatises of classical authors.

In his logic and commentaries on Aristotle, Marsilius followed in the footsteps of WILLIAM OF OCKHAM and JOHN BURIDAN, but in a critical manner. He considered sense data as the foundation of human knowledge and defended the nominalist opinion that there are no universals outside the human mind. Metaphysics is the highest form of natural knowledge, since it deals with the first and most universal principles. Using his natural capacities (*lumen naturale*, natural light), man is able to have true knowledge of God. This applies especially to Aristotle, whose thinking is the paradigm of human natural thinking according to Marsilius. Man can prove that God exists and has knowledge and a will, but he cannot demonstrate that God has free choice, is infinitely powerful, and can create from nothing. To prove this, man needs the supernatural light of the Christian faith (*lumen supernaturale*). If man is not guided by faith but follows the principles of natural knowledge, he will find the opposite of truth, namely that God acts necessarily, has only limited powers, and cannot create from nothing.

Marsilius' influence was enormous. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries he was considered as one of the most important proponents of nominalism, together with Ockham, Buridan, and GREGORY OF RIMINI. His works on logic and commentaries on Aristotle were used as textbooks at many universities. The style of his thinking was characterized as clear, modest, and easy to understand (*stilus humilior*) and was recommended as an antidote against Wyclifism and Hussitism. In 1499 the doctors of the *via moderna* at the University of Heidelberg published a book with epigrammata by such famous humanists as Jacob Wypfeling celebrating the ingenuity of Marsilius. Humanistic epigrammata can also be found in the printed edition of his *Commentary on the Sentences* (Strasbourg 1501). Marsilius's theology became widely known and he was quoted by such Spanish theologians as Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo de Soto, Luis de Molina, and Francisco Suárez on matters concerning divine foreknowledge and grace.

## Bibliography

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