

Magic in Western Culture: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment

By Brian P. Copenhaver



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The story of the beliefs and practices called 'magic' starts in ancient Iran, Greece, and Rome, before entering its crucial Christian phase in the Middle Ages. Centering on the Renaissance and Marsilio Ficino - whose work on magic was the most influential account written in premodern times - this groundbreaking book treats magic as a classical tradition with foundations that were distinctly philosophical. Besides Ficino, the premodern story of magic also features Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, Aquinas, Agrippa, Pomponazzi, Porta, Bruno, Campanella, Descartes, Boyle, Leibniz, and Newton, to name only a few of the prominent thinkers discussed in this book. Because pictures play a key role in the story of magic, this book is richly illustrated.



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Editorial Review

Review

Brian Copenhaver's Magic in Western Culture is a towering achievement in the field of intellectual history that is evidently the product of years - or decades, one suspects - of its author's immersion in the primary sources. In spite of its focus on the history of magic, this book is in fact essential reading for students of the history of ideas, the history of philosophy, the history of medicine, the history of science and even students of art history, since Copenhaver places great stress on the significance of images in both the development and the dismemberment of the western magical tradition. It would be a shame if the book's readership were confined to historians of magic, since its significance is so much more far-reaching.' Francis Young, Reviews in History

About the Author

Brian P. Copenhaver is Distinguished Professor and Udvar-Hazy Chair of Philosophy and History at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and past president of the Journal of the History of Philosophy; he is also a member of the council of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento in Italy. He serves or has served on the boards of Rinascimento, Renaissance Quarterly, Annals of Science, the Journal of the History of Ideas, Early Science and Medicine, the International Archives of the History of Ideas, and the I Tatti Renaissance Library. The most recent of his eleven books is Peter of Spain's Summaries of Logic (2014, with Calvin Normore and Terry Parsons).

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