



Aristotle in the Italian Vernacular Rethinking Renaissance and Early-Modern Intellectual History (c. 1400–c. 1650)

Marco Sgarbi



Topic

The project focuses on the vernacularization and popularization of philosophy in Renaissance Italy, which began just as the vernacular was beginning to establish itself as a language of culture thanks to the new printing press.

Why did Galileo Galilei publish his scientific works in vernacular?

Material

Over 400 hundred printed and manuscript works, 100 authors.



Objectives

- (1) Identify the recipients of vulgarizations and popularizations.
- (2) Explain the meaning of the process of vulgarization and popularization of knowledge.
- (3) Discover the conception of knowledge that such writings brought to the culture of Renaissance Italy and the emergence of modern science.



Some preliminary results

- (1) Vulgarizations and popularizations of philosophical works were aimed at the “people,” including “idiots”, “ignorants,” “illiterates” artisans, women, and children and not only aristocrats or men of letter.
- (2) Popularization was not simply a matter of disseminating, simplifying, and trivializing knowledge. The first aim was the education of the people.



Some preliminary results

- (3) Popularization upheld the notion of widespread knowledge.
- (4) The scientific progress comes with the transformation of language. No new knowledge, without a new language and vice versa.
- (5) Knowledge was no longer perceived as predominantly closed, aristocratic, it was more open, “democratic,” and “egalitarian.”



Some preliminary results

- (6) Secrecy in Renaissance Italy generally became an anti-value, whereas sharing and opening up knowledge became a moral imperative.

- (7) Knowledge is power, power for all.

- (8) Strong impact on the birth of modern science.