

# Philosophy: Be a Scholastic and a Humanist

The scholastics trained themselves to develop arguments using only logic and deduction. The Scholastics had one purpose and one purpose only—to defend the Church doctrine, authority and traditional beliefs.

Humanist philosophers likewise used logic and deduction to develop arguments; however, they did not develop arguments in order to defend authority, doctrine or traditional understanding. Instead, they were drawn to describe and understand *truth* for its own sake by testing the plausibility of ideas, concepts, beliefs and assumptions.

For the following assignment students must develop arguments in both the style of the scholastics and also the humanists. The purpose of such an activity is to give students a firsthand appreciation for the reliability of the explanations provided by either philosophical method.

## Procedure:

- 1). For each of the questions below read the provided information about a natural phenomenon or problem.
  - 2). Then develop an argument to explain the phenomenon in the *style* of the scholastics and then also in the style of the humanists (or the *current* understanding).
- Note:** bonus marks are earned if you can provide supporting (or secondary) arguments to support your primary argument.
- 3). You can use *Google* to find information.

## Exemplar

### Medieval Concept Example Argument

According to the Catholic Church, the punishment for sinful behaviour was disease.

### Scholastic View

Sin is a disease of the soul; it follows therefore that when the soul is unhealthy so too is the body.

### Humanist View

Disease is not punishment for sin but rather a result of being exposed to disease carrying pathogens, e.g. bacteria, viruses, etc. Support for disease being the consequence of being exposed to “natural” forces is the use of vaccination against small pox by Arabs (a practice imported to Europe by Queen Urika Elenora of Sweden).

### **Medieval Concept #1**

*According to the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas, the existence of God can be proved, i.e. God is the unmoved mover.*

### **Scholastic Proof**

### **Humanist or Current Proof**

### **Medieval Concept #2**

*According to the Greek philosopher Ptolemy, the surface of the Moon was pristine (or perfectly smooth). The Catholic Church adopted this idea and expanded on it by explaining the Moon was pristine because no sin had ever been committed there.*

### **Scholastic Proof**

### **Humanist or Current Proof**

### **Medieval Concept #3**

*According to the Catholic Church, the Church and scripture were co-equal in authority.*

### **Scholastic Proof**

### **Humanist or Current Proof**

### **Medieval Concept #4**

*The nature of the lion is such that he is not enraged by men if he is not harmed by them. Lions will attack men instead of women. Lions only kill children if they are exceptionally hungry.*

### **Scholastic Proof**

### **Humanist or Current Proof**

**Medieval Concept #5**

*According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, larger objects fall faster than smaller ones because it is in their nature to do so.*

**Scholastic Proof****Humanist or Current Proof****Medieval Concept #6**

*Monarchs, by virtue of their divine right to rule, have the power to heal by their touch.*

**Scholastic Proof****Humanist or Current Proof**