

Growth and Evolution of Renaissance in Sixteenth Century

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Abstract

Renaissance is one of the important movements in the history of the world that brought drastic and major changes in the whole society of the world. Renaissance means re-birth and reawakening of the dramatic and cultural activities not only in the European countries but also all over the world. Various intellectual thinkers contributed a great deal to the development of this movement. Humanism is one of the chief traits of renaissance that affected many thinkers of the world during this period of time.

Paper

The term Renaissance seems to have been first used by the French historian, Jules Michester, in his book *historie de france*, published in 1835. It was immediately taken up by other scholars and while all have recognized its general value as a description of a unique historical era, none have really been able to define it, the debate over its meaning continues to this day. It has been described as the birth of the modern world out of the ashes of the dark ages; as the discovery of the world and the discovery of man; as the era of untrammelled individualism in life, thought, religion and art.

Recently, some historians, findings that these attributes were present in various people and place in the Middle ages, and also that many elements long held to be Medieval survived in into renaissance, have denied that Renaissance ever existed. Cristopher Hibbert says in this connection, "It was a kind of rebirth and re-awakening in the modern age with the advent of Renaissance."¹

The supposedly settled notions of the medieval world were at no time exempt from challenge, and new values of human potential were constantly being opened to view. The Renaissance was a product of

medieval society as fully as it was a reaction against it. Among the chief implications of Renaissance can be included as the death of medieval Scholasticism which had for long time been keeping human thoughts in bondage. The schoolmen got themselves entangled in useless controversies and tried to apply the principles of Aristotle's philosophy to the doctrines of Christianity, and paved the way for the literature characterized by polemics which did not advance man in any way. Ferdinand Schevill rightly puts it as, "With the Renaissance, there was enlightening and light of knowledge and cultural activities."²

It also signaled a revolt against spiritual authority- the authority of Pope. The Reformation, though not a part of the revival of learning, was yet a companion movement of in England. Renaissance intellectuals distinguished themselves by their flagrant anti-authoritarianism.

Moreover, the Renaissance implied a greater perception of beauty and polish in the Greek and Latin scholars. This beauty and polish were sought by Renaissance men of letters

to be incorporated in their native literature. Lauro Martines puts as, "There was growth in the field of painting and art as well as in sculptures."³

There were many causes behind the growth and development of Renaissance. The fall of Constantinople was among the chief reasons. It was the centre of learning and although it was under the clutches of Christians, many Greek scholars were there who got famous by teaching Greek language and literature to the people.

In 1453 A.D. Muhammad 11 of Ottomon empire occupied Constantinople and devastated it, and out of fear, the Greek intellectuals left Constantinople and entered into different cities of Italy, like Venetia, Milan, Naples, Sicily, and Rome etc. They taught mathematics, history, geography, philosophy, astronomy, medicine etc. to the people of Italy. This gave birth to Renaissance.

Secondly, the invention of printing press by Coxtton also accelerated the pace of growth of Renaissance. It was invented in 1477 A.D. He also invented letters and printed book. Willaim Coxtton brought this machine to England in 1477 A.D. With the passage of time, printing machines were established in Italy, France, Belgium and other European countries. Thus, book could be published very easily in a short duration of time. People could easily get books for study and learnt

many things. This also galvanized Renaissance.

Alchemy is the study of the transmutation of materials through obscure processes. It is sometimes described as an early form of **chemistry**. One of the main aims of alchemists was to find a method of creating gold from other substances. A common belief of alchemists was that there is an essential substance from which all other substances formed, and that if you could reduce a substance to this original material, you could then construct it into another substance, like lead to gold. Medieval alchemists worked with two main elements or *principles*, sulphur and mercury.

Paracelsus was an alchemist and physician of the Renaissance. The Paracelsians added a third principle, salt, to make a trinity of alchemical elements

The astronomy of the late Middle Ages was based on the **geocentric model** described by **Claudius Ptolemy** in antiquity. Probably very few practicing astronomers or astrologers actually read Ptolemy's *Almagest*, which had been translated into Latin by **Gerard of Cremona** in the 12th century. Instead they relied on introductions to the **Ptolemaic system** such as the *De sphaera mundi* of **Johannes de Sacrobosco** and the genre of textbooks known as *Theorica planetarum*. For the task of predicting planetary motions they turned to the **Alfonsine Tables**, a set of

astronomical tables based on the *Almagest* models but incorporating some later modifications, mainly the **trepidation** model attributed to **Thabit ibn Qurra**. Contrary to popular belief, astronomers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance did not resort to "epicycles on epicycles" in order to correct the original Ptolemaic models—until one comes to Copernicus himself.

With the Renaissance came an increase in experimental investigation, principally in the field of dissection and body examination, thus advancing our knowledge of human anatomy. The development of modern neurology began in the 16th century with **Vesalius**, who described the anatomy of the brain and other organs; he had little knowledge of the brain's function, thinking that it resided mainly in the ventricles. Understanding of medical sciences and diagnosis improved, but with little direct benefit to health care. Few effective drugs existed, beyond **opium** and **quinine**. **William Harvey** provided a refined and complete description of the **circulatory system**. The most useful tomes in medicine, used both by students and expert physicians, were *materiae medicae* and *pharmacopoeiae*.

Italy was the birthplace of the Renaissance. Its importance as a trading centre, with many coastal ports on the Mediterranean Sea, had created a wealthy society

whose money helped establish Italy as a place of learning and culture. Important universities were set up, including one at Padua which had a large medical faculty where anatomy was taught. Anatomy was also important in Italy due to the many artists who worked there. Employed by wealthy Italians to decorate their houses with paintings and sculpture, they wished to recreate the lifelike images produced 1000 years earlier by the Greeks and the Romans. Artists as well as doctors studied anatomy and carried out dissections to understand the workings of the body in order to create a more realistic portrayal of the human figure.

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2. Ferdinand Schevill, History of Florence: From the Founding of the City Through the Renaissance (London, Frederick Ungar, 1936), p. 113
3. . Lauro Martines, April Blood: Florence and the Plot Against the Medici(Oxford, Oxford University Press 2003), p. 114