

Renaissance Humanism

The “People” People

Renaissance Humanism

Was about squaring new thinking with old ideas.

Neoplatonism inspired creativity and accomplishment.

Revival of skepticism:

- Erasmus-Peaceful doubting
- Machiavelli-Tyrannical doubting
- Montaigne-personal doubting



Floyd remained a devout skeptic until the bitter end.

Humanism

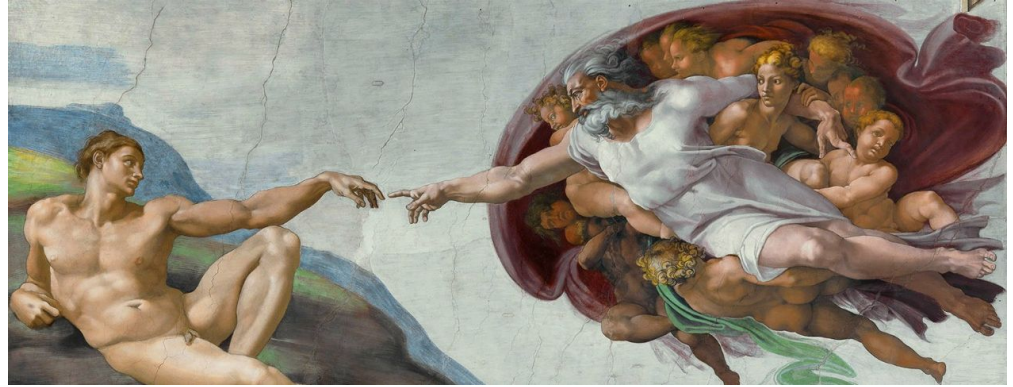
The Middle Ages were about religious philosophy.

- People can't know or do much without God, scripture, or the Church.

During the Renaissance, we gradually stop feeling so helpless.

Humanism

- Things we say and do ARE important
- How do we blend new stuff with church teachings?



Classical Philosophy Reborn

Neoplatonism and Aristotelean
Scholasticism:

The world isn't just an inferior
reflection of God's ideal forms:

- God created it (and us) and it is (we are) beautiful.
- God created US to be creators
- Paradox: People are both important and clueless



Learned Ignorance

Nicholas of Cusa (1400-1464)

God is unknowable

God is the only reliable truth

The more you learn, the more you see how ignorant we are.

Don't stop learning, just accept that you can't really know *anything* for sure.



Learned Ignorance

Cusa, continued...

“Religious dogma is just, like, your opinion, man.”

The Infinity Circle

- Gives us more leeway in how to behave
- Responsible for our OWN behavior
- Humanity is a work of God’s art, and we should create too

Microcosm vs Macrocosm

Acceptance of Change (Luther, Copernicus)



So...What are they all about?

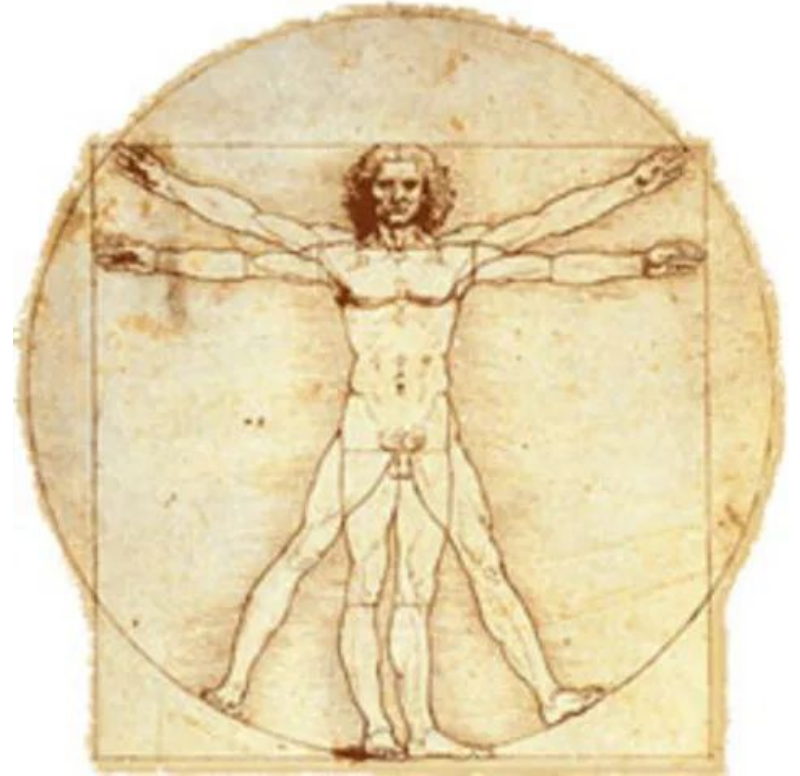
Not really into Ontology or Epistemology

Loved the Hellenistic classics (Stoicism, etc.)

The practical and social > spiritual.

What is a good life?

Excellence in music, art, poetry, science, combat, soldiery,, virtue, and piety. (The ideal "Renaissance Man.")



Erasmus (1466-1536)

Drew on newfound classical knowledge to reform religious ideas.

Better translations of the Bible would reveal *original* meaning.

People can live in peace if they have faith in God and show love to one another.

ALL arguments are unimportant.

Since you can't be sure of what you know, understand the Bible on your own terms.

(NOT Martin Luther)



Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

As skeptical as Erasmus, but didn't recommend detachment.

If knowledge is impossible, moral rules must be flexible.

Better to be feared than loved.

Tyrannical measures by a ruler creates peace and stability. (A little evil for a greater good)



Michel de Montaigne

Invented the “essay” (try, attempt)

VERY flexible

- Doubted reason itself
 - Human reason is NOT superior. Divine grace separates us from animals.

**There is no
conversation more
boring than the one
where everybody
agrees.**



QuoteHD.com

Michel de Montaigne
French Writer

1533-1592

The Big Humanists

Erasmus: Revise how other people think

Macchiavelli: Control other people

Montaigne: Just fit in (you should think deeply, just don't try to make a splash).

Together: Separate philosophy from theology.

