

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

A. Introduction

In this topic the student will examine the fine arts and the beginnings of the scientific revolution. The student will show how the tone of civilization was set within these parameters. The course goal is **to evaluate the intellectual life of the Renaissance** according to a criteria of the people, places, and times involved and the degree of certitude warranted.

Defining the Renaissance is difficult. The professor regards the Renaissance as Late, Late Medieval. Renaissance values were medieval and religious rather than modern and secular. The pre-modern view was that "the world was governed by spiritual forces."¹ As one scholar puts it:

. . . it is not useful to describe a *period* in European history; it was, rather, a set of developments during a time in which quite contrary tendencies were also at work, some of them destined to survive and grow stronger during later centuries. One of the most positive tendencies in Renaissance scholarship today has been its focus on . . . movements toward liberation. . . it is at least of symbolic importance that the *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* has disappeared and been reborn as the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*.²

As scholars generally think, however, there is first a narrow Renaissance focused on Italy and then a broader Renaissance covering the whole of Europe and extending from the mid-Fifteenth to the early Sixteenth Centuries.³

B. The Fine Arts

Interest here is in the later Middle Ages, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Up to that time, the Church had been the chief patron of the arts; after that, laymen. The difference was that a work of art done for the glory of God came out differently from a work of art done for its own sake.

Another difference came with the development of new techniques and models. The Fourteenth Century Florentine, Giotto, used light and shadow to create a new illusion of depth. Within a century, Masaccio gained the full technical understanding of how the sense of perspective in art was attained.⁴

Other world renowned painters also come from this era.⁵ Leonardo da Vinci did the Last Supper and the Mona Lisa, according to Will Durant, the world's most famous paintings.⁶ The Last Supper was painted with pigments which would later flake. Da Vinci liked to think and the more lasting non-flake paint required quicker application and, hence, less thought. Durant⁷ unequivocally stated that da Vinci was gay. Later, Durant pointed out that no one has surpassed Da Vinci in representing virginal delicacy, motherly solicitude, or feminine subtlety.⁸ Durant, evidently, is associating cross-sexual sensitivity with homosexuality.

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

C. *The Beginnings of the Scientific Revolution*

New developments in science were an outgrowth from, as much as a break with, the past. The intellectual quest for the truth led the inquisitive European mind from God to his creation and back again, in an everlasting circle. From the examination of what medieval people thought of God's creation came what modern people think of as human creation, namely contemporary technology.

Significant developments in physical science took place between 1450 and 1700. In 1453 Gutenberg invented the printing press. In 1610 Galileo used the telescope to view the moon. The differences created a new attitude which became the directive force of the Western world and earned Galileo the sobriquet, "The Father of Modern Science."⁹ The changes questioned the revealed universe of Christianity; influenced the curricula of the schools; imposed new literary standards; and suggested new techniques for social organization.

The causes of this fundamental change in science have been the subject of a long debate. Underlying much of the criticism of modern education are the assumptions that changes in content, methodology, and philosophy will bring about changes in the attitudes of graduates and eventually in society. Perhaps this likelihood is self-evident, but the Renaissance Era humanistic critics went so far as to urge the elimination of all arithmetic, geometry, and music from the curricula because such subjects were too commercial or not necessary for the good life. This in turn brought a constructive redirection of higher as well as secondary education, at least in Italy.

Put more plainly, medieval education was designed to suit employment. Renaissance education was designed to suit enjoyment. Dr. Jirran assumes that neither one is mutually exclusive of the other.

D. *Particular Change*

Humanistic critical methods, especially in textual criticism were applied to science and led from an attack on sources to a plea for practical investigation and demonstration. The major results brought the professor closer to the students. Once printing developed in conjunction with the humanistic attack on the nature and content of university teaching, change was much easier.

E. *Conclusion*

By reading and by studying The Renaissance under the aspect of the Fine Arts and the Beginnings of the Scientific Revolution, students were able to evaluate the intellectual life of the Renaissance.

Supplement

F. *Introduction*

The first two paragraphs in The Fine Arts (continued) used to be in the lecture. On August 28, 1990, HIS 101-03 convinced me to use "lecture" to refer to the main notes and "supplement" to refer to the rest. This group was also convinced that the Supplement to Topic Two, at least, would be easier to read did I use "I" instead of "the professor" and "you" rather than "the student." When the Supplement to Topic Two was rewritten July 26, 1991, that suggestion was not taken. The

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

more impersonal approach lends an aura of objectivity and academic rigor which the beginning student needs to realize that Dr. Jirran both respects and utilizes.

The following material on music, the Bible, and medicine has special interest to many students. Almost all Thomas Nelson Community College students have had some private music lessons. Ninety per cent of the students have read at least significant portions of the Bible. Some of the best students are the nursing students, with their special interest in medicine.

G. *The Fine Arts (continued)*

The Renaissance was hardly all lightness, fluff, and beauty. There is a ghoulish side to the Renaissance. For example cities would hire masters, like Giotto, Masaccio, and Botticelli, to defame offenders, otherwise, condemned in absentia. Other paintings were used to help guide those condemned to their executions. These painting-guides contained a weak reason for arguing for a causal relationship from the Renaissance to the later humane values of the Enlightenment.¹⁰ This type of artistic analysis, de-emphasizing the more formal stylistic approach all the while emphasizing the more contextual approach was in vogue in 1990. How social and historical factors shaped and defined artistic work keeps receiving more scholarly attention.¹¹ It is the beauty, nonetheless, for which the Renaissance is most beloved.

During 1987, using new insights, scholars made the claim that the Mona Lisa was actually a self-portrait. This deduction was made by measurements between the eyes and the bridge of the nose. The measurements of the Mona Lisa and Da Vinci are the same. These measurements, evidently, are as unique to people as are their fingerprints.¹²

Not only has the quality of scholarship increased, but so has the quantity. Understanding the Italian Renaissance has spread from Florence in the past twenty years, to include Venice and Rome. In the late Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries, Renaissance achievements were drawn back into the Church. Interest in the universal empire of ancient Rome was put to the service of the universal authority claimed by the papacy.¹³ From 1450 to 1527 Rome was the intellectual center of Europe.¹⁴ The Index of Forbidden Books was established in 1557 by Pope Paul IV¹⁵ and is regarded by the professor as a major contribution to the loss of that ascendancy.

The relationship between technology and art strikes at the heart of the contemporary scene. Technology is part of what the advertiser calls the ". . . for everything else there's Master Card." Van Eyck illustrates the impact of technology on art. Van Eyck is described in the seventh edition of Chambers on pages 392, 401M, 412. The assigned reading for this topic is pages 392-408. The caption on page 392 for *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife, 1434* helps make the point.

The problem runs as follows. Technology has become more than an instrument in the hands of the artist. For some technology is the end, the purpose, of civilization. For others technology is, as Martin Heidegger¹⁶ put it, a way of being-in-the-world. The question is how and can traditional values integrate technology into a sacredness of life from conception to natural death.¹⁷

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

The professor understands the issue as between truth and politics. Politics in this case represents technology as a use of power. Truth, in the face of that power, acts to dampen, if not prevent, an abuse of power. Genocide, for example, is an abuse of power, an abuse which truth as ;understood within a human context, can prevent, rectify, and, at least, mitigate. In the final analysis the conflict between truth and politics, as between technique and values is dialectical rather than hierarchical. At the interplay between the two is where this study of Western civilization is taking place. The one learns from the other. Technique serves to clarify values, values serve to clarify technique in civilization.

Eric Fuchs, the distinguished Protestant moral theologian, draws ethics and aesthetics together with the injunction that art delivers a message, "Change your life!"¹⁸ The professor wonders how his students would react to this. The professor never did understand why his students rejected his notion that art should reflect the good, the true, and the beautiful, and lift the soul toward those same ends.

The caption on page 566 in the seventh edition of Chambers for Nicolas Poussin, *The Inspiration of the Epic Poet*, ca 1628 should not leave the misimpression that Poussin was the only one who "believed that painting, like poetry, had to elevate the minds of its audience." As the professor looked out of his fifth story condominium window overlooking the beach and ocean at North Topsail, North Carolina, for the December 26, 1999 rendition of this lecture, there he found his sense of art. The picture outside the window is something God is making and, indeed, does change his life. The picture is also good, true, and beautiful. The professor has never been much taken by whatever art that humans make. The fault is the professor's. He notes that appreciating art takes an effort, always rewarded by a deeper appreciation. His own fancy is trying to understand Western civilization.

H. Jerome

The first effect of this new humanism was to make the students themselves better prepared to enter the universities where Latin was not only the language of the lecture room but also, in theory, the language of student life. The emphasis on Latin dominated the new secondary school curriculum, raising the level so that the better-prepared could immediately enter into the subject matter without taking time to acquire the fundamental language tools. It takes only a good-sized minority of well-trained students to raise a whole class level.

Saint Jerome, who died about 420, translated the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Latin. From the Thirteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries, from Aquinas to Shakespeare, he was greatly honored. The ascetic Jerome inspired Fourteenth Century hermits. The Biblical scholar inspired the Italian humanists against Scholasticism. The militant Jerome inspired the Catholic Reformation.¹⁹

Jerome²⁰ inspired Lorenzo Valla (d. 1457)²¹ who inspired Erasmus (d. 1536).²² Pushed by the humanists, Renaissance spirituality opened the life of public service to holiness. Jerome did it without fancy philosophy and with a good sense of historical-critical and social science methodology. Jerome remains a sort of Renaissance man for all seasons.

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

Even more importantly, the humanistic attack on the subject matter forced a re-examination of curricula and teaching materials by introducing such authors as Euclid, Ptolemy, and Archimedes. Earlier these men had stood outside the university tradition which only considered natural philosophy worthy of study.

Of the 6,170 estimated languages available in the Twentieth Century, the Bible has been translated into 1,910, of which 1,768 are still living languages. That means that the Bible has only been translated into slightly less than thirty percent of the languages available. The two thousand languages into which the Bible has been translated represent about ninety percent of the languages used. The other ten percent of the people speak the other four thousand languages.²³ The remnants of the Renaissance are very much part of Twentieth Century Western identity.

I. Music

Durant indicated that the only European invention in musical instruments was the keyboard, by which the strings were indirectly struck, instead of being directly plucked or bowed. The oldest known form, the clavichord, was first used in the Twelfth Century. Bach used this in much of his music.

In the Fifteenth Century, the clavichord was made stronger with the harpsichord. The harpsichord allowed modifications of tone through differences of pressure. The Italian version of the harpsichord was the spinet; the English, the virginal.²⁴ Other significant secular instruments were the violin, the flute, and the lute (a plucked string instrument with a rounded body), which became popular as a result of the rising "middle class" and amateur music.²⁵

J. Medicine

European medicine advanced in a by-gosh and by-golly manner, always open to new departures. In contrast, Asian medicine, once given classic formulation, lost that openness. European hospitals were helpful, giving practitioners an opportunity to observe the symptoms and course of a disease. A cure that worked could be tried by other professionals.

The ancient Greek Hippocratic tradition fit this approach. New diseases arising between 1200 and 1700 gave rise to new cures in Europe. In contrast, Asian medical personnel, who did not work in hospitals, stuck with the ancient remedies. When something new did creep into Asian remedies, its newness was denied.

The plague of the Black Death took a considerable toll before effective remedies began to be identified. The Black Death began in 1347 and by 1500 Italian doctors had worked out a series of public health measures designed to quarantine the plague. During the Sixteenth Century, theories of plague developed. One such theory originated in the folk belief that wool and textiles could carry plague. Actually it was the fleas, leaving their dead rat hosts for bales of wool, which were the culprits.

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

Better scholarship now indicates that syphilis was not the gift of the Indians to the Europeans. The Sixteenth Century, nonetheless, was when physicians gave considerable attention to that disease. This meant that ancient thinking was challenged, so much so that Paracelsus (1493-1541) entirely rejected the authority of Galen. When practitioners examined the tension between the tried theories of Galen and the new ones of Paracelsus, medicine itself advanced in Europe as nowhere else on the globe.²⁶

K. Conclusion

In this lesson, the student is to evaluate the intellectual life of the Renaissance. That intellectual life was determined by the truth, much more than by politics. The incompatible inseparables at work here are those between naturalism and symbolism or empiricism and aesthetics. The trend from the Renaissance has been away from naturalism and toward symbolism. This trend accelerated with the advent of the camera. A more cyclical trend has been away from aesthetics toward empiricism, particularly with the advent of modern scientific measuring devices.

Comments on the Seventh Edition of Chambers, pages 0392-408

In the opinion of the professor, Chambers is the most scholarly textbook on the market. Chambers well represents mainstream thinking in the history profession. The professor, however, disagrees in many significant ways with mainstream thinking. Some of these disagreements are set forth above and others in the following comments.

Page	Column	Paragraph	Line	
0392	caption			See page 412, column 2, paragraph 2, line 13.
0397	caption			versus caption on page 200.
0398	"Map 12.1 The Spread of Universities in the Renaissance"			see page 281 for "Map 9.2 Medieval Universities."
0399	2	2	9	". . . Giotto . . ." versus page 286 , column 1, paragraph 3, lines 3-4, ". . . a humanizing touch. . ." versus page 292 caption ". . . great displays of emotion. . ." see page 313 caption ". . . Giotto . . ." see page 400 caption ". . . Giotto. . ."
0400	caption			see page 400 caption ". . . Giotto. . ."
0400	1	1	3	". . . perspective." see page 402 picture above caption <i>Masaccio</i> .

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

see page 400, column 2, last paragraph, 5th line, ". . . perspective . . ."

see page 403, column 1, paragraph 2, line 2, ". . . perspective. . ."

1 2 1

"Donatello"

see page 402 picture above caption *Donatello*.

0402 caption

see page 400, column 1, paragraph 1, ", , , Masaccio. . ."

see page 400, column 1, paragraph 1, ", , , Donatello . . ."

0403 caption

". . . Brunelleschi's famous dome--"

see page 563 caption, ". . . the huge dome Michelangelo had designed."

0403 1 2 2

". . . perspective . . ."

see page 403, column 1, paragraph 2, line 2, ". . . perspective. . ."

0404 1 2 1-6

". . . Venice . . . this most down-to-earth . . . of Europe's cities. . ."

see page 406 caption, "The earthy realism of Venice . . ."

Footnotes

¹ Donald Harman Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922*, page 151, as cited in the review by Thomas William Heyck in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (July 1990), page 836.

² William J. Bouwsma, "AHR Forum: Eclipse of the Renaissance," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 1 (February 1998), page 116.

³ William J. Bouwsma, review of John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (February 1996), page 172.

⁴ Plate 19, in Volume Two, of the three volume set, depicts The Holy Trinity with the Virgin and St. John. This mural was done for a private patron, who, with his wife is incorporated into the picture kneeling in prayer.

The religious dimension of life was not lost on these lay patrons. The step on which the patron kneels coincides with the eye level of the viewer. The picture is not meant only to draw the mind to God, but is also meant to remind one of who it was that commissioned the painting. The patrons kneel on a step which is the dividing line between time and eternity. The skeleton below the step, which one today might find gruesome, served as an effective reminder of the brevity of life on earth, a prelude to the life hereafter.

⁵In the north, Jan van Eyck did his The Virgin and Child in the Church, Plate 18. Michelangelo (mike . . . is the better pronunciation), probably the best example of the universal genius of the Renaissance, did The Creation of Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Plate 24.

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

⁶ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Part V: The Renaissance: A History of Civilization in Italy from 1304-1576 AD* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), page. 104.

⁷ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Part V: The Renaissance: A History of Civilization in Italy from 1304-1576 AD* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), page 200.

⁸ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Part V: The Renaissance: A History of Civilization in Italy from 1304-1576 AD* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), page. Vol. V, p. 215.

⁹ William A. Wallace, O.P., review of Mario Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism* in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (July 1994), pages 604-607.

¹⁰ Samuel Kline Cohn, Jr., review of Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., Pictures and Punishment: Art and criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance, in The American Historical Review, Vol. 91, No. 2 (April 1986), pp. 424-425.

¹¹ Christopher Kent Wilson, review of "Winslow Homer's Images of Blacks: The Civil War and Reconstruction Years." Menil Collection, 1511 Branard, Houston, TX 77006; Traveling exhibition. Oct. 21, 1988--Jan. 8, 1989, Menil Collection, Houston, TX; Feb. 14--April 2, 1989, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; May 6--July 2, 1989, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC. Karen C. C. Dalton and Peter H. Wood, curators; Walter Hopps, collection director; "Winslow Homer's Images of Blacks: The Civil War and Reconstruction Years. By Peter H. Wood, Karen C. C. Dalton, and Richard H. Powell. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988. 144 pp. \$19.95.) in The Journal of American History Vol. 77, No 1 (June 1990), page 246.

¹² Three points an hour to the first person documenting this for me. I saw this in the news media, but no one article had sufficient documentation for me to save for this purpose. A list of several articles, which I never began, is what would help.

¹³ Cohn, review of Edgerton, p. 424.

¹⁴ John McManamon, S.J., review of *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture* edited by Anthony Grafton in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (January 1994), page 122.

¹⁵ *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard P. McBrien, General Editor (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), page 661.

¹⁶ Page 1123 in the seventh edition of Chambers.

¹⁷ Timothy Casey, review of Carl Mitcham, (ed.), *Ethics and Technology*. Research in Philosophy and Technology, Volume 9; series editor, Frederick Ferre and Wolhee Choe, *Toward an Aesthetic*

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

HIS 101--31 The Renaissance © Dec. 12, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

Criticism of Technology. Worcester Polytechnic Institute Studies in Science, Technology and Culture, 2. in *Cross Currents: Religion and Intellectual Life*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1990), pages 280-283.

¹⁸ Eric Fuchs, "The Mutual Questioning of Ethics and Aesthetics," *Cross Currents: The Journal of the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pages 26-27.

¹⁹ John McManamon, S.J., review of Eugene F. Rice, Jr., Saint Jerome in the Renaissance, The Catholic Historical Review, Vol. 73, No. 3 (July 1987), p. 443. William J. Bouwsma uses "Catholic and Protestant Reformations" in his review of John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 1 (February 1996), page 172.

²⁰ The fourth edition of Chambers, page 187; the fifth edition of Chambers, page 196; the sixth edition of Chambers, page 145 and 176.

²¹ The fourth edition of Chambers, page 434; the fifth edition of Chambers, page 470; omitted in the sixth edition of Chambers.

²² The fourth edition of Chambers, pages 442 and 494; the fifth edition of Chambers, pages 482, 483, 543-44.

²³ Alexander A. DiLella, O.F.M., review of Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement, by William A. Smalley (The Modern Mission Era, 1792-1992: An Appraisal) in The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 4 ?? (October ???1991), pages 663-664.

²⁴ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Part VI: The Reformation: A History of European Civilization from Wyclif to Calvin: 1300-1564* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), pages 772-3. Pictures of these instruments would be useful.

²⁵ Joseph Machlis and Kristine Forney, The Enjoyment of Music, 6th ed., (???).

²⁶ William H. McNeill, Plagues and Peoples (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), pp. 210-211.