

VI.1.d.  
RenaissanceThe Renaissance

The rebirth of learning begins in the earlier part of our period and peaks towards the end. It arises out of a fresh interest in the classics and the standards of antiquity. With Dante Alighieri (d. 1321) and his literary heirs, the older classics were recovered and restored and reintroduced to both the scholarly world and the public media. A key feature in this was the use of vernacular speech for the publication of literature (The INFERNO in Italian, for example). The schoolmen of the church were not adept at this (vernacular work) and their interests would be best expressed in a fuller understanding of the Greek philosophers and the attempt to "Christianize" all the great thinkers of the western world...the western past.

The cultural renaissance had a foundation in the Italian principalities where excellence of life had become a watchword. The Italian dukes vied with one another for the artists, poets, musicians, architects, etc., in order that these persons of gift might adorn the locality of interest. With freedom from life-support obligations, these gifted persons created new expressions in art, etc., and developed an increased interest in the media for almost all persons.

Humanism suddenly shot to the forefront in the philosophical ideals. Humanism of the classical sort was the interest in man as an end in himself...body-building, etc. Greek humanists stressed the beauty of the body, the welfare of the physical man, the enabling of human fulfillment as man enjoyed liberty and expression. Babies who seemed to lack the potential to fulfill the goal...were exposed and allowed to die on the hillsides. The humanism of the renaissance, however, coupled some of this ideal with an interest in improving the lot of man's life on earth. We must note that the humanism of this period is not to be confused with the humanism known to us today in which a pronounced anti-god influence is felt. Classical humanism was at its worst agnostic; renaissance humanism was warm towards God as the Creator of man, while cultural humanism of the rational age tries to free man from whatever forces restrict him and make his life "difficult". Modern humanism has magnified secularism to a "god-status"