



**IDEAS IN WESTERN CULTURE:
The Medieval and Renaissance
World
PART TWO**

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Professor Soltes has taught for many years at the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies and directed its Institute for Jewish Life and Culture. He has also taught at Princeton University, the Johns Hopkins University, Case Western University, Cleveland State University, and George Washington University. Professor Soltes has been a guest scholar at six other universities and has taught in Israel, Italy, and the Soviet Union. He has also lectured extensively at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and other museums throughout the United States, and he has served as a guest curator in museums throughout the country. Professor Soltes has varying degrees of working knowledge of twenty-one languages.

Ideas in Western Civilization: From the End of Antiquity to the Beginnings of Modernity

The medieval period is the bridge between antiquity and modernity. During these centuries the pagan Roman Empire and its barbarian fringes become Christian Europe, and Christianity struggles to define itself and its relationship to other faiths, especially Judaism and Islam. The medieval period is an age of enchantment and chivalric love, as well as an age of faith whose spiritual borders are increasingly assailed by secular concerns. It is an age of religious pilgrims, knights and crusaders, clerics and common people. We see their images in powerful works of art--paintings, sculptures, and soaring cathedrals--and their voices echo in diverse literature--travel books, epic poems and sagas, theological dialogues, passion plays, and drinking songs. During the Middle Ages the language of divinity begins to evolve into the language of our time.

Toward the close of the medieval period in the late fourteenth century, western Europe looks backward in two directions simultaneously: toward the firmly rooted but increasingly troubled Christianity that had come to dominate Europe, and toward the cultural legacy of pagan antiquity. Late medieval thinkers focus increasingly on humans in the world--on human achievements and foolishness--rather than on God, and they consider how to relate the human world to the divine. The result is Renaissance humanism, an explosion of cultural accomplishment in visual art, literature, and music that ranges from Giotto to Michelangelo, from Dante to Shakespeare.

This course will examine this extraordinary sweep of cultural history from the aftermath of Emperor Constantine's "conversion" in the fourth century to the burgeoning of Descartes's doubt in the seventeenth century. We will tantalize the student with tidbits from a wide array of literary and visual works, rather than examine a few such works in great detail. We hope to inspire the student to read more deeply and widely and look further than the brief span of twenty lectures allows us.

READINGS

I. Required

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*

Dante Alighieri. *The Inferno*

Erasmus of Rotterdam. *Praise of Folly* (Penguin, 1971)

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*

Meiss, Millard. *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death: The Arts, Religion, and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century* (Princeton, 1976)

More, Thomas. *Utopia*

Murray, Linda. *The High Renaissance and Mannerism: Italy, the North & Spain* (Thames Hudson, 1985)

Petrarch, Francesco. *Petrarch's Secret: Or, the Soul's Conflict with Passion* (Hyperion, 1991)

Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni. *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (Regnery, 1956)

Rabelais, Francois. *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Penguin, 1955)

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet*

Vasari, Giorgio. *Lives of the Artists*

Wofflin, Heinrich. *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance* (Phaidon Press, 1994)

II. Recommended

Cawley, A.C., ed. *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays* (Everyman's Classic Library, 1993)

Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Book of the Courtier*

Cellini, Benvenuto. *Autobiography*

Friedlander, Walter. *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting*
(Columbia, 1990)

Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte d'Arthur*

Montaigne, Michel de. *Essays*.

Tasso, Torquato. *Jerusalem Delivered*

Seznec, Jean. *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition
and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (Princeton, 1972)

Wind, Edgar. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Norton, 1969)

Western Civilization Time Line

323	Council of Nicaea
410	Sack of Rome by Visigoths under Alaric
411-532	Burgundian kingdom in upper Rhone valley
c.420	End of Roman government in Britain
430	Death of St. Augustine of Hippo
c. 450	Anglo-Saxon invasion of England begins
455	Vandal sack of Rome
476	Deposition of Romulus Augustulus, last Western Roman emperor
481-511	Clovis, king of the Franks, establishes the Merovingian dynasty
524	Death of Boethius
c. 529	St. Benedict writes his monastic Rule
590-604	Reign of Pope Gregory I (the Great)
597	Mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury to England
632	Death of Mohammed (born c.570); beginning of rapid Muslim expansion
714-741	Charles Martel reestablishes single control over Frankish kingdom
751	Pepin the Short, son of Charles Martel, is crowned king of the Franks; Merovingian king is deposed
768	Death of Pepin; accession of Charlemagne (died 814)
800	Pope crowns Charlemagne in Rome
840	Death of Einhard, Charlemagne's biographer
843	Treaty of Verdun; division of Carolingian empire into three parts, Lotharingia, France, and Germany
910	Foundation of Cluny
911	End of Carolingian dynasty in Germany
911	Treaty of St.-Claire-sur-Eppes; Normandy granted to Normans under Hrolf
919-1024	Saxon dynasty in Germany
936-973	Otto I, king of Germany
987	End of Carolingian dynasty in France; start of Capetian dynasty
1054	Final schism between Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches
1056-1106	Henry IV, German king and emperor
1059	Lateran synod; establishment of College of Cardinals
1066	Battle of Hastings; Norman conquest of England
1073-1085	Reign of Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand)
1077	Penance of Henry IV at Canossa
1096-1099	First Crusade
1142	Death of Peter Abelard (born 1079)
1147-1149	Second Crusade

1154-1189	Henry II, first Plantagenet (Angevin) king of England
1170	Death of Thomas a Beckett
1189-1192	Third Crusade
1202-1204	Fourth Crusade; westerners capture Constantinople
1215	Magna Carta
1221	Death of St. Dominic (born 1170)
1226	Death of St. Francis (born 1182)
1274	Death of St. Thomas Aquinas (born 1225)
1295	Model Parliament established in England
1305-1378	Papal residence in Avignon
1321	Death of Dante Alighieri (born 1265)
1338-1453	Hundred Years' War
1347-1349	Black Death in Europe
1374	Death of Petrarch (born 1304)
1375	Death of Boccaccio (born 1313)
1378-1415	Great Western Schism; rival popes in Avignon and Rome
1400	Death of Chaucer (born 1340)
1414-1417	Council of Constance; restoration of papacy to Rome
1415	Battle of Agincourt
1434	Cosimo de Medici gains control of Florence
1455-1485	Wars of the Roses in England
1453	Capture of Constantinople by Ottoman Turks; final destruction of Byzantine empire
1456	Bible printed by Gutenberg
1461-1485	House of York in England
1485	Battle of Bosworth; death of Richard III; beginning of Tudor dynasty in England
1492	Fall of Granada, last Moorish stronghold in Spain; discovery of America by Columbus
1497	Vasco de Gama reaches India
1509-1547	Reign of Henry VIII, king of England
1517	Martin Luther's 95 Theses
1519	Death of Leonardo da Vinci (born 1452)
1520	Death of Raphael (born 1483)
1527	Death of Machiavelli (born 1469)
1527	Sack of Rome by Charles V's army
1535	Death of Thomas More (born 1478)
1536	Death of Erasmus of Rotterdam (born 1466)
1545-1563	Council of Trent
1546	Death of Luther (born 1483)
1562-1598	Religious wars in France
1564	Death of Michelangelo (born 1475)
1576	Death of Titian (born 1477)
1616	Death of Shakespeare (born 1564)

Lecture Eleven: Street Language Becomes Literature

The fourteenth century marks the transition from the medieval era to the Renaissance. During this turbulent and vibrant century, Renaissance concepts --and with them concepts from classical antiquity--begin to encroach upon the faith-suffused world of the Middle Ages.

The rise of Renaissance ideas is nowhere more evident than in fourteenth-century literature. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* combines a portrayal of medieval social types with the more secular and earthy attitudes that will typify the Renaissance. Dante's *Divine Comedy* also bridges the medieval and Renaissance periods, combining stylistic and substantive elements from both.

Readings:

Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (Prologue, Knight's Tale, Tale of the Wife of Bath, Prioress's Tale)

Dante, *The Inferno*

I. Chaucer (cont.)

- A. *The Canterbury Tales* offers a range of issues and ideas that define the 14th century, which links the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

II. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

- A. Dante is consumed with passion for love and politics
1. Dante's love for Beatrice inspires his *Vita Nuova* (1292)
 2. Dante wins a minor ambassadorship; is exiled from Florence (1302)
- B. *The Divine Comedy*
1. A narrative allegory, with Dante representing mankind and Virgil representing reason
 2. *Divine Comedy* combines medieval and Renaissance elements
 3. Trinitarian structure of the poem; *terza rima* verse structure
 4. *Divine Comedy* is both epic and lyric poetry
 5. Meeting of politics and love in Dante himself
- C. *The Inferno*
1. Poem opens in a perfect, imaginary setting in which time and space follow their own rules
 2. At edge of the wood, Dante meets a lion, leopard, and she-wolf--allegories of problems besetting him in real life
 3. Dante enters hell (3rd canto), descends past the ninth circle (Cocytus) and into the Malebolge
 4. Inferno is realm of the other, where reason does not apply; down becomes up and up becomes down

5. Exit from Inferno at night.

III. *Ars Nova* (14th century)

- A. Musical development--organized polyphony, motets, musical notation through language
- B. Church condemns *Ars Nova* as heresy (1324)
- C. Guillaume de Machaut--greatest 14th century composer
- D. Cathedral choirs sing complex music by end of 14th century

IV. Mixture of faith and reason at dawn of the Renaissance

- A. Literature
 1. Dante's search in *The Divine Comedy* ends with faith
 2. Chaucer's characters are earthy and reflect mundane concerns
- B. Problem of periodization: when does the medieval era end and the Renaissance begin?
 1. Renaissance--the rebirth of classical ideas

Short Essay

1. In what respect does *The Divine Comedy* represent a bridge between the medieval and Renaissance periods? How does it combine medieval and Renaissance elements?
2. What does the forest represent in Dante's *Inferno*?
3. How is hell organized, as depicted by Dante in *The Inferno*?

Lecture Twelve: Renaissance Humanism

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a time of *renaissance* that marked the rediscovery or *rebirth* of the humanistic ideals of pagan antiquity. In reclaiming these ideals, Renaissance humanists did not thereby reject the Christian faith. Rather, they melded classical and Christian ideals, retaining a sense of man's debt to God but emphasizing the human being's initiative, potential, and responsibility for forging his own path in life.

Petrarch, like Dante, bridges the medieval and Renaissance periods. This great poet and scholar was among the first to show interest in preserving the texts and literary styles of pagan antiquity. His work reflected both the medieval interest in death and the afterlife, and the Renaissance emphasis on man's active role in achieving eternal happiness by desiring and pursuing virtue in the present life. We will return often in subsequent lectures to this question of free will *versus* fate or predestination.

Readings:

Petrarch, *Petrarch's Secret*

I. Rebirth of classical style

- A. Renaissance artistic style fuses medieval and ancient ways of seeing the world
- B. Renaissance humanism: new focus on man as the measure of all things (cf. Protagoras)
 1. The human body and mind conform to an order and constitute a *microcosmos*
 2. Renaissance sculpture and painting focus on the human figure

II. The calamitous 14th century

- A. Black Plague (1347-1349)
- B. Factional conflict among Italian city-states
- C. Papal residence in Avignon (1305-1378), followed by Great Western Schism (1378-1415)
- D. Great accomplishment in literature and visual art

III. Petrarch--the first Renaissance humanist

- A. Life of Petrarch (1304-1374)--orator, poet, philosopher, traveller
 1. Petrarch bridges the Middle Ages and Renaissance
- B. Petrarch is the Renaissance humanist *par excellence*--has far-flung interests, accumulates huge library, urges preservation of ancient pagan manuscripts
 1. Petrarch as a bridge between past and future

2. Petrarch's main interest is Rome, not Greece; his heroes are Cicero (thought) and Scipio Africanus (action)
 3. Influence of St. Augustine on Petrarch
- C. *Secretum Meum*--Petrarch's imaginary dialogue between himself (Franciscus) and St. Augustine (Augustinus)
1. Petrarch shows his concern for the past through his choice of sources and the dialogue style
 2. Main concerns are death, afterlife, and evil--medieval and Renaissance concerns
 3. Petrarch recapitulates Stoic and Socratic teaching: remember and accept your mortality; pursue happiness by avoiding vice and self-deception and by meditating upon death
 4. Centrality of the human will--each individual is responsible for choosing his path in life; each should desire virtue and meditate upon death to remind himself of the need to act with rectitude

Short Essay

1. According to Petrarch, what should humans do to attain happiness?
2. Why is Petrarch regarded as the Renaissance humanist *par excellence*? How does he constitute a bridge between the Middle Ages and Renaissance?
3. Why does Petrarch counsel human beings to meditate on death?

Lecture Thirteen: Esoteric Humanism and Human Form

Renaissance humanism centers upon the individual human being--his physical form, his self-driven intellectual and spiritual potential, and his ability both to understand and to control the world. The artistic works of Duccio, Giotto, and Massaccio underscore this humanism in focusing on the variety and dimensionality of the human physique.

We also find this humanistic focus in Marsilio Ficino's examination of man's pursuit of spiritual union with God and in Pico della Mirandola's adulation of man's unlimited potential and personal responsibility for shaping his life, both in this world and in the next.

Readings:

Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*

Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death*

I. Visual art--new focus on the human form

- A. Duccio's "Virgin and Child"--narrow features reflect Byzantine sense of physicality; three-dimensionality of these holy figures indicates new emphasis on their humanity
- B. Giotto
 1. "Christ Crucified"--robust corpus; depiction of human suffering; weighted human figures twist in space; unbalanced symmetry
 2. "Lamentation" from Arena chapel of Padua--unbalanced symmetry between angels above and humans below; movement downward from right to left; two figures seen entirely from behind.
- C. Massaccio
 1. "Expulsion" (early 15th century)--figures show full physicality, emotional anguish
 2. "Tribute Money"--figures draw viewer into the picture frame; stylized and spaceless landscape
 3. "Holy Trinity"--Christ figure illustrates focus on the human body; attending figures show unbalanced symmetry

II. Marsilio Ficino and the Platonic Academy

- A. Ficino revives Platonism as a philosophical doctrine and intellectual movement
 1. Under patronage of the Medici, Ficino establishes the Platonic Academy as a school for contemplation
 2. Plato's works become available in Latin translation (15th century)

Lecture Fourteen: Educating the Powerful and Privileged

In this lecture we consider Niccolo Machiavelli and Baldassare Castiglione, whose works illustrate the Renaissance turn toward secularity and practicality--toward taking the necessary practical steps to achieve one's earthly goals. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli offers eminently practical advice for gaining and keeping political power--he is concerned not with moral considerations of right and wrong but with what *works*. Condemned by the Church and other respectable opinion during Machiavelli's own lifetime, his writings have become a landmark of Western political theory.

Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* is less explicitly instructional than *The Prince*, but it also mixes considerations of fortune and practical skill. Castiglione's image of the perfect courtier combines noble birth with excellence in arms--a depiction that evokes both the chivalric knight of medieval lore and the contemporary gentleman.

Readings:

Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier* (R)

I. Renaissance music (cont.)

- A. Development of rhythm; counterpoint uses dissonance on both strong and weak beats to create new musical patterns
- B. *Cantus firmus* is switched among several voices
- C. Canons (15th century)--several voices work together to create a euphonious structural whole
- D. Words and music together convey emotion

II. Niccolo Machiavelli

- A. Machiavelli's career
 1. He serves as secretary of the Florentine republic while the Medici are out of power (1494-1511)
 2. His family falls from favor when the Medici return to power in 1511
- B. *The Prince* (pub. 1537; condemned by the Church in 1559)
 1. Machiavelli dedicates *Prince* to the young Lorenzo de Medici in hope of gaining rehabilitation
 2. Ruler's duty is to maintain order and keep the state strong; he must use all means at his disposal--especially force--to gain and keep power; when at peace, he must be ready to wage war in order to preserve his power

3. Ficino sees harmony between Platonism and Christianity; Platonic doctrine can support faith
- B. *Five Questions Concerning the Mind* (1476)
1. Everything has an essence that directs that thing toward its proper end or good
 2. Ficino goes beyond Plato to identify God as the totality of Being--the ultimate Good which illuminates all else; God maintains interest and involvement in His creation
 3. Human nature is composed integrally of body and soul; both are inclined toward union with God (cf. Petrarch's *Secretum Meum*)

III. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1492)

- A. Another Renaissance humanist--brilliant; extensive knowledge of the ancient classics; wide-ranging interests
- B. *Oration on the Dignity of Man*
 1. *Oration* was the introductory speech for his intended public defense of 900 theological and philosophical theses, some of which were condemned by the Church
 2. Pico is *doctus*--cites a wide range of authorities
 3. Man is the apogee of creation; he is responsible for shaping the world around him and his own destiny; all limitations are self-imposed
 4. Importance of free will--one can shape his earthly life and afterlife through his own actions and desires; both soul and body will be reborn into perfection if one pursues good desires and avoids bad

IV. Practical manifestations of Renaissance humanism

- A. Rise of financial institutions--banks, stock exchanges, insurance companies; reflects a more earthly orientation, active involvement in shaping one's life; pursuit of material well-being in the present life
- B. New sources of patronage for arts and literature
- C. Curiosity fosters navigational inventions and overseas discoveries
- D. Establishment of new schools, e.g. at Mantua (1425)
- E. Rise of Renaissance music after 1420
 1. Choruses share harmonies; new concern to blend voices in order to avoid dissonance and create euphony

Short Essay

1. How does 14th century art illustrate the notion of "unbalanced symmetry"? Include specific examples in your answer.
2. How did Ficino view the relationship between Platonism and Christianity? What is the *humanistic* component in his Christian Platonism?

Short Essay

3. Prince must learn how to appear virtuous while acting viciously when necessary to retain power
4. Prince should be thought generous but avoid excessive liberality
5. Prince should seek to be both feared and loved, although the former is more important.
6. Prince should avoid incurring his subjects' hatred, especially by seizing their property
7. Prince must imitate both the lion and the fox

III. Baldassare Castiglione

A. Life of Castiglione

1. Born 1478; served the dukes of Milan and Urbino (the latter as a diplomat)
2. Moved to Spain in 1524; became a bishop; died there in 1529

B. *Book of the Courtier* (written 1513-1518, published 1528)

1. *Courtier* offers a picture of the perfect courtier whose perfection comes from noble birth and skill at arms
2. Castiglione writes *Courtier* for the courtiers of the della Rovere duke of Urbino (Federigo da Montefeltro), following his deposition by Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medici), who wanted to transfer the duchy to the pope's nephew Lorenzo.
3. *Courtier* describes the manners of the idealized court of Urbino under its earlier duke, Guidobaldo
4. Influences on Castiglione--ancient Greeks, Cicero, Petrarch, Boccaccio
5. *Courtier* looks backward to the medieval knight and forward to the contemporary gentleman
6. Importance of fortune--noble birth confers a sense of obligation to behave nobly, but it is not sufficient for achieving perfection; the courtier must also excel in arms
 - a. Castiglione's description of the perfect courtier evokes the image of the chivalric knight

1. According to Machiavelli, what is the main duty of a prince? What must the prince do in order to fulfill this duty?
2. How does Castiglione's advice to the courtier differ from Machiavelli's advice to the prince? How does each view the respective importance of fortune and personal initiative in fulfilling one's duty?

Lecture Fifteen: From Heaven to Earth

Our examination of fifteenth century history and literature continues. During the latter half of this century, England is riven by dynastic conflict: the Wars of the Roses between the houses of York and Lancaster, which culminate in Henry Tudor's establishment of the Tudor dynasty. Anxious to avoid a recurrence of dynastic civil war, Henry's son--Henry VIII--will spare no effort to secure a male heir, ultimately at the cost of England's allegiance to the Church of Rome.

Next we examine four examples of Renaissance literature--the morality play *Everyman*, Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the love story *Tristan and Iseult*, and Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. These tales are emblematic of the Renaissance combination of religious and secular themes. They mix medieval and even antique elements with secular and humanistic concerns, producing a distinctive Renaissance style.

Readings:

Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*

Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays (R)

Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (R)

I. The fifteenth century in history

A. Rise of the duchy of Burgundy

1. Takes control of Netherlands

B. Dynastic turmoil in England

1. After Battle of Agincourt (1415), Henry V takes control of much of France
2. 1450--England loses Normandy to Charles VII
3. 1455--Battle of St. Albans; dynastic war in England
4. 1460--Henry VI defeated at Northampton; Duke of York puts his son on the throne as Edward IV
5. 1470--Henry VI is restored as king; Edward IV and followers flee to Flanders; later they stage counter-coup and Edward returns to power
6. 1483--Edward dies; Duke of Gloucester murders Edward's sons and takes power as Richard III
7. 1485--Richard is killed at Battle of Bosworth; Henry Tudor takes power as Henry VII, followed by his second son as Henry VIII

C. English myth of national greatness

1. Development of a large royal court; royal progresses through the country to display the king's authority
2. Mythic aura of Edward III and Henry V

3. Rise of the cult of King Arthur--Malory rewrites Arthurian legend; ideal of kingly chivalry

II. Renaissance literature

A. *Everyman*--a medieval morality play carried into the Renaissance

1. Personified abstractions represent good and evil
2. God is reduced to one among many characters
3. Dialogue between Death and Everyman over how to restore a sense of God's importance in human affairs

B. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*

1. Presence of both biblical and classical themes in Arthurian legend--e.g., changelings, honor, gamesmanship, passion for another's wife, guest-host relations
2. Violations of the traditional chivalric code: Lady Igrayne, wife of the Duke of Tintacle, rejects the advances of the love-smitten King Uther Pendragon; Uther lays siege to Duke's castle
3. Uther's heart is broken by Igrayne's rejection; the prophet Merlin arranges tryst between the disguised Uther and the deceived Igrayne, who subsequently bears Arthur
4. Contradictory nature of the human condition: heroes behave in anti-heroic manner; the ultimate hero--Arthur--is conceived in impropriety
5. Arthur's true identity is concealed until the appropriate time--when he thrice extracts the sword from the stone; the Commons and then the nobility acclaim him as king; Arthur restores order and peace
6. Arthur battles the six kings; he triumphs with the aid of Excalibur
7. Arthur tries but fails to eliminate his half-brother Mordred, who later causes his undoing
8. Arthur ultimately goes underground and England awaits his return (cf. the second coming of Christ)

C. *Tristan and Iseult*--a tale of star-crossed lovers

1. After drinking potion, Iseult falls in love with Tristan instead of King Mark, her betrothed and Tristan's best friend
2. Familiar triangular theme of love-honor-death: how can one fulfill the obligations posed by both love and duty? (cf. Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot)
3. Problem of fate/destiny versus free choice

D. Francois Rabelais

1. Life of Rabelais--he moves in and out of religious life; practices medicine
2. *Gargantua and Pantagruel*--satirical treatment of monasticism's failure to live up to its ideals
3. Rabelais's Abbey of Theleme: "Do what you will"
4. Birth of Gargantua; his marriage to Gargamelle; birth of Gargantua's son Pantagruel

Short Essay

1. What are the main concerns of the English morality play *Everyman*? What Renaissance elements do we find in this play?
2. What biblical figures and themes do we find in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*?

Lecture Sixteen: Vision and Revision

We move from Rabelais to Erasmus of Rotterdam, the great Renaissance humanist, philosopher, and man of letters. Erasmus joined Rabelais in mocking--although somewhat less caustically--the hypocrisy, pride, and cupidity of the Catholic clergy, although Erasmus did not ridicule or reject Christianity itself. Indeed, he was schooled by the Brethren of the Common Life to uphold the primitive Christian ideal of simple piety. It was the *neglect* of this ideal that he criticized in the Church life of his own time.

We turn next to early Renaissance visual art, which reflects the humanism of the era in its dynamic combinations of balance and imbalance; its emphasis on depth, which incorporates the viewer into the scene; and its more realistic and natural depictions of the human figure.

Readings:

Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*

Wolfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*

Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (R)

Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (R)

I. Rabelais (cont.)

- A. Rabelais's redefinition of monastic life: no walls, only beautiful people are admitted, rejection of chastity; free departure, emphasis on earthly pleasure, the inhabitants make their own rules
- B. His monks resemble Castiglione's ideal courtiers

II. Erasmus of Rotterdam

- A. Erasmus and the rebirth of Latin literary style
 - 1. Erasmus is one of the first to view his era as a time of *renaissance*
 - 2. He tries to purify the ancient Latin texts of scholastic accretions
 - 3. Preference for simplicity; focus on ethical demands of the Gospels
- B. Life of Erasmus (1466-1536)
 - 1. Educated by Brethren of the Common Life, who taught him simple piety
 - 2. Entered Augustinian order after his parents' death; later withdrew
- C. *In Praise of Folly*
 - 1. Figure of Folly ridicules humans--including churchmen--who worship her
 - 2. Erasmus mocks the idea of buying salvation, the pretenses of scholasticism, the carnality of the clergy
 - 3. Christian humanism--Erasmus emphasizes the individual's own involvement in achieving salvation; he mocks not Christianity but its practitioners
- D. *The Funeral* (1526)
 - 1. Marculfus and Phaedrus discuss funerary ritual and the meaning of death
 - 2. Through the dialogue between Marculfus and Phaedrus, Erasmus ridicules the doctors, priests, and academicians who attend the dying man George
 - 3. Erasmus mocks Church life as hypocritical and focused on money

III. Renaissance visual art

- A. Donatello
 - 1. "Gattamelata" (1430s)--equestrian statue of a *condottiere*; first equestrian portrayal since that of Marcus Aurelius; horse raises one hoof over the *orbis mundi*; combination of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal elements
 - 2. "David" (1430s)--shows variations of balance and imbalance; e.g., straight *versus* relaxed limbs
 - 3. "Feast of Herod"--center of action is off-center; figures recoil from the center of action; architectural elements create sense of depth
- B. Jacopo della Quercia's "Expulsion"--intense emotional quality
- C. Ghiberti's "Baptism of Christ"--Christ figure is surrounded by a spatially defined nimbus (a humanistic substitute for the halo)

D. Piero della Francesca

- 1. "Baptism of Christ"--Jesus is connected to earth but linked with God the Father; angels are naturalistic peasant children
- 2. "Resurrection"--Christ has peasant's bodily features; his figure represents the meeting of heaven and earth
- 3. "Duke and Duchess of Urbino"--very naturalistic portrayals (note connection to the court immortalized in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*)

E. Verrocchio

- 1. "Bartolomeo Colleone" (1480s)--another equestrian image
- 2. "David"--even younger than Donatello's; no musculature; smooth and sinewy figure

F. Botticelli

- 1. "Birth of Venus" (1480s)--personification of *eros*; illogically proportioned limbs yet a beautiful figure (indeed, beauty personified)
- 2. "Adoration of the Shepherds"--pyramidal stable structure; attending figures create a triangle pointing toward Christ at center; "new order" architecture growing out of the ruins of "old order" architecture

Short Essay

- 1. Why is Erasmus regarded as a Christian humanist when he is so critical and scornful of Church practice?
- 2. How does fifteenth-century visual art illustrate the Renaissance era's humanistic focus on the human form?

Lecture Seventeen: From Earth to Heaven

We conclude our discussion of fifteenth-century art by examining two important written sources of information about Renaissance artists and their patrons--Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* and Benvenuto Cellini's *Autobiography*. We then turn to the Protestant Reformation--the religious counterpart of the Renaissance in dividing the medieval from the early modern periods of Western history.

The Reformation finds its origins in the social, political, economic, and of course religious legacy of the medieval world--including growing clerical worldliness and abuse of power, the turn to mysticism, urbanization and the rise of a middle class, papal-imperial conflict, and ongoing natural catastrophes. These developments gradually weaken the Church's authority and thus its ability to withstand the conflagration sparked in 1517 by the Augustinian priest Martin Luther.

Readings:

Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*

Cellini, *Autobiography* (R)

I. Renaissance visual art (cont.)

- A. Leonardo da Vinci's "Virgin of the Rock"--pyramidal arrangement of figures who are turned in space to create depth
- B. Michelangelo's "David"--*contraposto*; dynamic calm and symmetry

II. Sources and discourses

- A. Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550)
 1. Vasari is the first art historian since antiquity
 2. He recounts Leonardo's varied talents as visual artist, poet, musician; Leonardo's confrontation with the patron of "The Last Supper"
 3. Story of Michelangelo's tomb for Pope Julius II
- B. Benvenuto Cellini's *Autobiography*
 1. Cellini highlights the Renaissance focus on the individual artist
 2. He illustrates the linkage between politics and art

III. The Protestant Reformation

- A. Origins of the Reformation in problems inherited from the Middle Ages
 1. Papal-imperial conflict contributes to papal exile to Avignon and Great Schism
 2. Clerical worldliness
 - a. 1317--conflict between Franciscans and Pope John XXII over papal accumulation of wealth
 - b. Question of the propriety of papal patronage of the arts: Julius II, Sixtus V, Leo X
 3. Individual spirituality (especially mysticism) and humanism confront the Church's hierarchical authority structure
 4. Increasingly complex economy and society; rise of urban bourgeoisie
 5. Unabated natural catastrophes (e.g. Black Plague) produce religious disorientation
 6. Geographic exploration fosters new view of the world
- B. Martin Luther
 1. Educated by Brethren of the Common Life; enters law school, then the Augustinian order; he becomes a biblical scholar
 2. Luther becomes anxious about Confession--can one be sure he has confessed all of his sins?
 3. Luther's "tower experience" while at Wittenberg (1513-1519)--how can one achieve righteousness and survive God's justice? How can one win God's saving grace and thereby avoid damnation? Luther concludes that grace, not works, produces righteousness.
 4. Luther's Ninety-five Theses on Confession, precipitated by debate on indulgences: can the Church remit one's guilt for his sins?
 5. *Theses for the Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) on the theology of the Cross--man cannot obtain grace through his own will
 6. *Address to the Nobility of the German Nation*
 7. 1520--Church condemns Luther's works; 1521--in Diet of Worms, Luther formally secedes from the Church of Rome and rejects papal authority
- C. John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*--a second secession

Short Essay

1. What were the causes of the Protestant Reformation?
2. What was Luther's objection to indulgences?
3. What was Luther's answer to the problem of how sinful human beings can achieve righteousness?

Lecture Eighteen: April Fool's Day

The Reformation era was a time of great crisis in religion, politics, and the economy, and--perhaps not coincidentally--also a time of great creativity in the visual arts and literature. In this lecture we pick up the threads of Calvin's commentary on the properly-lived spiritual life. Then we discuss two writers of the late sixteenth century whose escapist tales evoked the tremendous social and political flux of their era. Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* mixes pagan and Christian images in a heroic poem that idealizes the First Crusade--perhaps the defining event of the departed Age of Faith. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare transports us to a different sort of reality in which time and space follow their own rules and people are not what they appear to be.

Readings:

Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered* (R)

I. John Calvin (cont.)

- A. Skilled in classical studies and New Testament Greek; a leading French reformer; wrote the *Institutes* (1536-1540) while in Basel; later moved to Geneva; achieved greater international influence than Luther did
- B. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
 1. Justification by faith alone
 2. Calvin seeks to dispel doubt about the inerrancy of Scripture
 3. Authority of the church to declare certain Scriptures as canonical arises from Scripture itself
 4. Calvin rejects scholastic accretions, urges attention to the Scriptures alone

II. Reformation and Renaissance: Crisis and Cultural Triumph

- A. Crisis conditions generate creativity--great art and literature
- B. Religious wars in Europe, 16th and early 17th centuries
- C. Reformation and Counter-Reformation
- D. Crisis in economy and society; economic relationship between the Church and its adherents

III. Escapism and fantasy--Torquato Tasso (1544-1595)

- A. Tasso's early life
 1. Born in Sorrento, Italy; political feud between his father and his mother's family--Tasso never saw his mother again
 2. He briefly studied law in Bologna, then became a poet; served in the House of Este
- B. *Jerusalem Delivered*

1. An idealized, romantic treatment of the First Crusade (the crusaders establish a kingdom in Jerusalem in 1099 but are expelled by Saladin in 1187)
2. Tasso invokes the muses and God's inspiration; he mixes fiction and fact, pagan and Christian symbolism to create a larger-than-life heroic poem
3. A different sort of epic poem--it begins *in medias res* and follows traditional epic style, but it gives little scope to fate; God favors the Christian crusader Godfrey against the Moors
4. Mixture of pagan and Christian elements: e.g., the angel Gabriel plays the role of Hermes, conveying a message to Godfrey from Jove
5. A backward look at an earlier, idealized world in which Christendom was still united in a noble common cause

IV. William Shakespeare

- A. Shakespeare as tragedian, historian, comedian; wide range of subjects and styles
 1. Who was the author of Shakespeare's plays?
- B. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*--a poem/play
 1. A dreamlike setting--a different reality; midsummer as a point of transition (cf. Dante); a time out of time and space out of space
 2. True love is thwarted by parental authority--love *versus* duty
 3. Townspeople prepare a play to be staged at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta
 - a. Quince summons the players to rehearse in the woods under moonlight--an unreal setting
 - b. None of the players is what he appears to be
 - c. Sleep descends, and Puck can set all aright

Short Essay

1. How does Calvin defend the infallibility of the scriptures? What is the ultimate source of their authority?
2. How does Torquato Tasso combine pagan and Christian references and symbolism in *Jerusalem Delivered*?

Lecture Nineteen: Myth, History, Power, and Family

Shakespeare's tragic play *Hamlet* shows a much darker sort of escapism than does his comedic play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The latter play ends happily with lovers united, identities recovered, and Puck restoring order to the disordered scene. *Hamlet* concludes, by contrast, with deception, madness, and a holocaust of blood from which only Horatio survives to pronounce the "sweet prince's" epitaph.

Sir Thomas More, finally, offers us a fantastic look at an ideal state, one that is literally nowhere in reality--a *utopia*.

Readings:

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

More, *Utopia*

I. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (cont.)

- A. Conflict between the fairy king Oberon and queen Titania mirrors the disfunction among Theseus and Hippolyta and the two young couples
- B. Puck causes Titania to fall in love with Bottom, whom he turns into an ass; after all players fall asleep, Puck can restore order.
- C. Play occurs in a dreamlike time and space; Puck's epilogue suggests that the audience has dreamt the play

II. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

- A. Story of an imaginary prince in a real setting; outcome of the play is tragic, not comic
- B. Concern with death and love, sanity and madness, family relationships, unnatural death
 1. Echoes from the stories of Orestes and Oedipus
- C. Act One
 1. Play begins with a dreamlike nighttime vision--an unreal time and place
 2. Hamlet meets his father's ghost, who urges Hamlet to avenge his murder
 3. Reason is insufficient for understanding reality--Hamlet must *believe* that the ghost is leading him in the proper direction
- D. Act Two
 1. Parent-child relationships--contrast between that of Polonius and Ophelia and that of Hamlet and his mother Gertrude

Short Essay

1. What are the main similarities and differences between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*?
2. How does Shakespeare address the theme of "being and not being" in *Hamlet*?

2. Ophelia's brother Laertes advises her to be wary of Hamlet--princes have special responsibilities
3. Polonius advises Gertrude that Hamlet is mad
4. Interview between Polonius and Hamlet--Polonius regards Hamlet's truth-speaking as madness
5. Rosencranz and Guildenstern conclude that Hamlet is mad

E. Acts Three and Four

1. Hamlet goes abroad; Rosencranz and Guildenstern fail to kill him
2. Hamlet's coldness drives Ophelia mad; she dies
 - a. Laertes blames Hamlet for Ophelia's death; Hamlet both is and is not at fault
3. Hamlet must be convinced of the need to kill his uncle Claudius--he stages the play within the play to reassure himself of Claudius's guilt
4. Hamlet murders Polonius by mistake--death begets death

F. Act Five

1. Yorick's skull--is Yorick the skull or the memory of the flesh-and-blood Yorick?
2. Hamlet and Laertes fight a sword duel in the palace; a "play of death," ending in complete desolation

- G. *Hamlet* is an escapist response to the harsh reality of the 16th century; concern with what is and is not

III. Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)

A. Life of More

1. 1529--became lord chancellor under Henry VIII
2. 1532--resigned in protest of Henry's policy toward the Church; refused to take oath rejecting papal authority
3. Trial of More for high treason; he is convicted and beheaded

B. *Utopia* (1516)

1. Return to Plato's concept of the ideal commonwealth; the *res publica* or *politeia*
2. Return to Aristotle--action centered in a particular place
3. Thomas More as a Renaissance humanist
4. Issues in *Utopia*: socialism, compulsory education, life of discipline guided by benevolent prince, religious toleration
5. Island of the Utopians is a perfect place in an imperfect world--all parts together compose a unified, ordered whole that includes spaces for organized disorder

Lecture Twenty: Religious Wars and Individual Reflections

Our study of the Renaissance era concludes with a brief look at the visual art and music of the High Renaissance and Early Baroque periods. As the sixteenth century progresses, visual artistic styles evolve away from Renaissance stability and calm balance, and toward the distorted forms and emotionalism of mannerism and the grandiosity of Baroque art. While the Council of Trent effects a conservative reaction in sacred music, curbing polyphony and the use of profane melodies in the liturgy, new forms for secular music continue to develop.

Readings:

Murray, *The High Renaissance and Mannerism*

Friedlander, *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism* (R)

Montaigne, *Essays* (R)

I. High Renaissance, Mannerism, and Early Baroque Art

- A. Raphael (1483-1520)--"School of Athens"
 - 1. Floor and ceiling move toward the vanishing point, occupied by Plato and Aristotle
 - 2. Representatives of various philosophical schools are arrayed on the stairs
- B. Michelangelo's "Creation of Man"
 - 1. Brilliant color; skillful shaping of forms
 - 2. Adam--from the Hebrew word for *earth* and *red*
 - 3. God is active, Adam is passive--at the point of animation or "ensoulment" (from the Latin *anima*)
- C. Giovanni Bellini's "Transfiguration" (1465)
 - 1. Christ figure is transfused with light; the apostles are enveloped in Christ's light
 - 2. Apostles are smaller than Christ--plays on the medieval correlation of size with importance
- D. Titian (1477-1576)--"Sacred and Profane Love" (c. 1515)
 - 1. Dynamic balance between two female figures
 - 2. *Eros* vs. *caritas*
- E. Rogier van der Weyden's "Deposition" (c. 1435)
 - 1. No landscape, middle ground, or background--represents a moment in time out of time and space out of space
 - 2. Figure of swooning Virgin mirrors that of Christ
- F. Hieronymus Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights" (late 15th century)
 - 1. Contrived landscape; architectural and anthropomorphic elements from Bosch's imagination

- G. Albert Altdorfer's "St. George in a Wood" (c. 1510)
 - 1. Focus on landscape for its own sake
 - 2. St. George as mediator between God and men
- H. Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" (1530s)
 - 1. Illustrates "mannerist crisis" of 1530s--movement away from stability and calm dynamism
 - 2. Herculean figure of Christ; emphasis on justice and punishment
- I. Parmigianino's "Madonna with the Long Neck"
 - 1. Illustrates mannerism in its distortion of form and color, focus on emotion rather than reason
- J. Tintoretto's "Finding of St. Mark's Body"
 - 1. Early Baroque grandiosity
 - 2. Architectural forms lead viewer away from center (as vs. "School of Athens")
- K. Veronese's "Wedding at Cana"
- L. Breughel's "Parable of the Blind"
 - 1. Landscape is reduced to a setting for larger-than-life humans (as vs. Altdorfer)

II. Music

- A. New musical forms--e.g., pavaues
 - 1. Antonio de Cabezón's "Pavane Consublosa" (mid 16th century)--triple-time dance for court use
- B. Rise of *virtuosi*--soloists, improvisers
- C. Instrumentation
 - 1. Use of chords--harmonic combinations of notes
 - 2. Closing sections--*cadenzas*--of musical pieces allow variations on prescribed patterns
- D. Council of Trent's guidelines for liturgical music (1562)
 - 1. Mass may not be sung too rapidly
 - 2. Use of profane melodies in Mass is forbidden
 - 3. Do not conceal the words under layers of counterpoint
 - 4. No "lascivious or impure harmonies"
- E. Secular music
 - 1. Lute songs of John Dowland (c.1563-1626)
 - 2. Other forms: fugue, suite, sonnet, cantata, concerto, madrigal
- F. Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) links Renaissance and Baroque music

III. Michel de Montaigne and preoccupation with the self

- A. Montaigne is explicitly egoistic
- B. Montaigne's *Essais* (1580-1588)--intensely personal essays about himself
 - 1. Use of free form; absence of structure or organization
 - 2. Men conceive of God in their own image
 - 3. Views thinking as a game; stresses limitations of human reason and of man's ability to know--a harbinger of the modern era

Short Essay

1. How do Raphael's "School of Athens" and Tintoretto's "Finding of St. Mark's Body" illustrate some of the differences between High Renaissance and Early Baroque visual art?
2. What different uses do landscapes serve in the visual art of van der Weyden, Bosch, Altdorfer, and Breughel? How do these artists portray the relationship between landscapes and the human beings who inhabit them?
3. Is Michel de Montaigne a humanist? Why or why not?

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