

The Renaissance

What's the big deal?



The Burckhardt Thesis (1860)

- ▣ The Renaissance (14th-16th centuries)
 - marked a distinct break from the medieval period
 - it was the beginning of the modern age...an age characterized by secularization!



What is the renaissance?

- ▣ French for rebirth
 - A rebirth of what?
- ▣ Appearance of a new attitude towards the world
 - Self-conscious awareness of change!
- ▣ 3 defining characteristics:
 - Secular Spirit
 - Individualism
 - Humanism



The Secular Spirit

- ▣ What does secular mean?
- ▣ Why do you think this “spirit” took hold?
- ▣ What was life supposed to be like?
- ▣ Was the Renaissance irreligious?



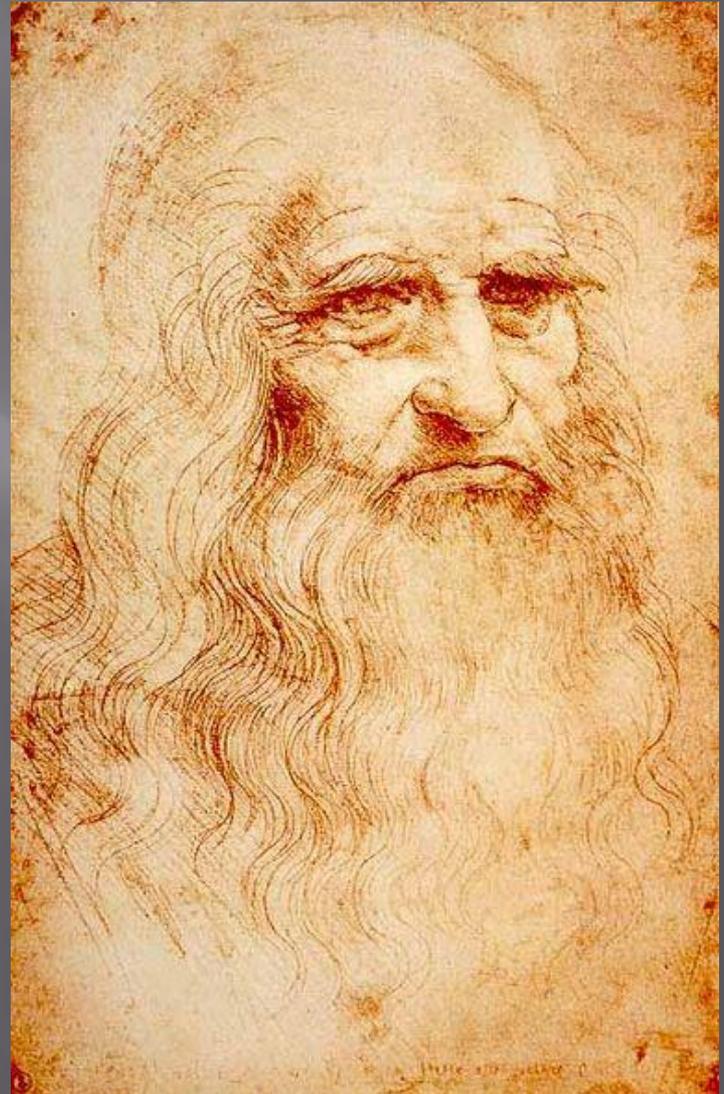
Individualism

- ▣ Mirandola – *Oration on the Dignity of Man*
 - There is nothing to be seen more wonderful than man...To him, it is granted to have whatever he chooses, to be whatever he wills.”
- ▣ What does this mean?
 - How is this different from medieval belief?



The Renaissance Man

- ▣ This stress on individualism promoted a quest for individual glory
 - Men of Virtù
- ▣ According to Castiglione, men should be well-rounded
 - Leonardo da Vinci is the perfect example of the Renaissance Man
 - Why?



Humanism

- ▣ What does humanism mean?
 - Cicero: “literary culture needed by anyone to be considered civilized”
- ▣ Petrarch
 - “Father of Humanism”
 - Scoured the monasteries of Europe for classic manuscripts



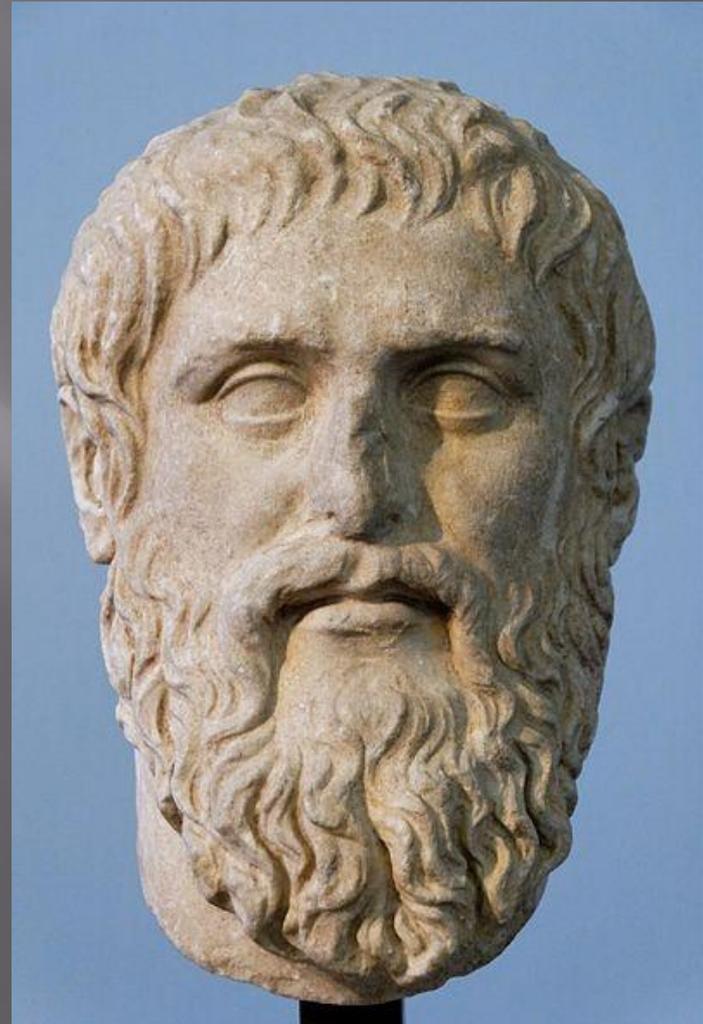
How is this different from scholasticism?

- ▣ What is scholasticism?
 - Used the superior works of the ancients to learn about God
- ▣ Humanists looked at the ancients differently:
 - Considered the ancients to be equals!
 - Searched the classics for an understanding of human nature!



The Revival of Plato

- ▣ Why weren't the humanists very concerned with the works of Aristotle?
- ▣ So, why did they read Plato?
 - Education: cultivation of the mind for equipping a person to play a worthy role in society



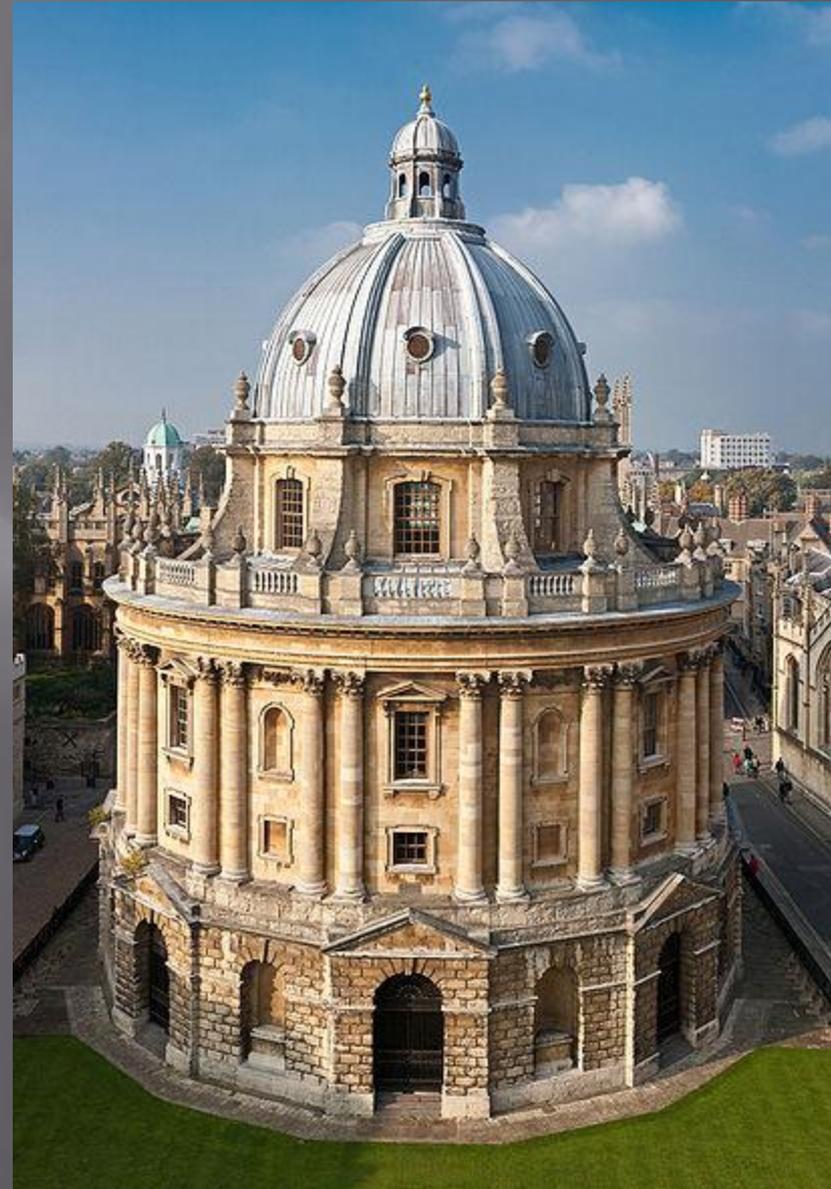
Civic Humanism

- ▣ Humanists searched Plato for a moral philosophy
 - Does the humanist have a responsibility to society?
- ▣ Example of Cicero
 - Humanist study only matured through service to the state!



Was Burckhardt correct?

- ▣ Was the Renaissance truly a watershed moment in history?
 - Medievalists: “NO!”
- ▣ Were there any significant changes in society during the late Middle Ages?



A Reinterpretation of the Renaissance

- ▣ Ferguson Thesis (1959)
 - Renaissance as an age of transition between the medieval and the modern
 - Essential change in European character...but why?
 - ▣ Gradual change to the economic structure of European society!



So, where does the Renaissance begin?

- ▣ As Ferguson argues, Renaissance culture is a product of the cities
 - ▣ Where are these cities in the 14th and 15th centuries?
- ▣ Why is this change able to occur in Italy?

