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The Renaissance and the Close of the Middle Ages

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Abstract

Mention the "Renaissance", and most of us will think automatically of the genius of Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, Donatello, or Leonardo da Vinci. There is, however, more to the Renaissance than beautiful pictures and brilliant individuals. The more we look into the term "Renaissance", literally "rebirth", the more slippery we find its meaning. In European historiography, perhaps the most value-laden and contested historical category, is the Renaissance. First, coined by Jacob Burckhardt in his book The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy, the term has come to dominate our consciousness of what the historical experience of this period was. The Renaissance, as far as this book is concerned, is conceived as a departure from the Middle Ages, a fracture point where European culture suddenly changed into a 'new" different culture. There are two important aspects to this change according to Burckhardt: the revival of the classical learning, character, and life (hence the 'rebirth' or 'renaissance' of the classical world) and the beginning of the "Modern Age". For in reviving classical learning, the Italians of the Renaissance created the prototype of modern culture. This article seeks to shed light on the distinction between the old medieval European world and the new modern one enhanced by monumental scientific inventions, humanistic movement, and the discovery of a new secular view of life.

I. INTRODUCTION

From the French *Renaitre* (to be born again) and the Italian *Rinascimento* (rebirth), the term "Renaissance" is given to the great revival of arts and letters under the influence of classical precedents which began in Italy in the fourteenth century and continued during the following two centuries spreading to virtually all parts of Europe. The Renaissance, the rebirth of classical art, architecture, literature, and learning marked the transition from medieval to modern times by referring to the objective of intellectuals and artists of the time to repudiate the previous era, the Middle Ages, and to restore the philosophical and artistic ideals of classical antiquity. For the first time, in a very long time, artists were granted a certain importance, and intellectuals in general started occupying a preponderant spot again. Renaissance art reflected this new conception of the world and of aesthetics in its compositions, offering a new revolutionary style that was the starting point for modern art. Artists abandoned Byzantine aesthetics to establish a more realistic art.

II. THE MOVE FROM THE MIDDLE AGES

The Renaissance was an essential era and a necessary evolution not only in artistic fields, but in all the aspects of European societies. Freed from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance found its inspiration in

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Antiquity, thus explaining the many biblical and mythological depictions. The Renaissance marked the beginning of modern times, where artists were celebrated and valued again, and could express themselves with a creativity that had no boundary. Many renaissance artists were in fact multi-talented and could reveal their genius in several art forms at a time, like Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo.

In France, Michel de Montaigne and François Rabelais were the most important proponents of humanist thought. Montaigne's *Essays* are memorable for their clear statement of an individual's beliefs and their careful examination of society. In Italy, where the Renaissance first blossomed, "Rinascimento" was the name of a great intellectual and cultural movement. The fusion of Greek and Latin culture that occurred as a result of the formation of extensive Latin dominions in the Eastern Mediterranean after the crusades can be regarded as the basic condition, if not directly, the cause of the Renaissance (Harbison, 1995). In Florence, the cradle of the classical revival, there was a great revolt against the intellectual sterility of the medieval spirit, and especially against scholasticism, in favour of intellectual freedom. Its first sign was a passion for the cultural magnitude and richness of the pagan world. Traces of this revolt can be seen in Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), who, although thoroughly medieval in his sympathies, chose the Roman poet Virgil as his model, and who, in the vigour and magnificence of his own verse, was a striking contrast to his contemporaries and earlier Renaissance authors.

Petrarch (1304-1374), was the first true poet of the Renaissance. His poems written in Latin hexameter followed the classical models of poetry. Petrarch's disciple, Boccacio, studied Greek and made a translation of Homer into Latin. Burckhardt offers a more effective view of the Renaissance in Italy observing that:

> (…) the literary bequests of antiquity, Greek as well as Latin were of far more importance than the architectural and indeed than all the artistic remains which it had left. They were held in the most absolute sense to be the springs of all knowledge…Great as was the influence of the old writers on the Italian mind in the fourteenth century and before. Yet, that influence was due rather to the wide diffusion of much that was new. The most popular Latin poets, historians, orators, and letter-writers, together with a number of Latin translations of single works of Aristotle, Plutarch, and a few other Greek authors, constituted the treasure from which a few favoured individuals in the time of Petrarch and Boccaccio drew their inspiration (…) a complete Latin translation of the *Iliad & Odyssey*, though a very bad one, was made at Petrarch's suggestion and with Boccaccio's help, by a calabrian Greek, Leonzio Pilato… (Baron, 1988).

In this perspective, the Renaissance is commonly held to mark the close of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the "Modern" western world. Although the problems of dating this process have caused much debate, the existence of a significant renaissance of European learning in the twelfth century is now accepted, while the eighteenth century is seen as a direct continuation of the Renaissance's intellectual tendencies (kraye, 1996). In literary terms, the Renaissance may be seen as a new tradition running from Pertarch and Boccaccio in Italy to Jonson and Milton in England embracing the work of Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare. It is marked by a new self-confidence in vernacular literatures, a flourishing of lyric poetry and a revival of such classical forms as epic and pastoral literature. The term "Renaissance" has also been extended to various literary revivals in specific times and places. The American Renaissance, for instance, or the Harlem Renaissance characterizes the impulse initiated in Italy, towards improving the contemporary world by discovering and applying the achievement of classical antiquity (Stewart, 1997. Renaissance was first used in the sixteenth century by Giorgio Vasari who saw a "rinascita delle arti", or the birth of arts in his own time, and Voltaire two centuries later, a "renaissance des letters et des beaux arts" in Medicean Florence (Farrago, 1997). The concept of an epoch marked by "the discovery of the world of man" was deeply taken up by Burckhardt who saw the defining emphasis of the Renaissance as secular and individual. The new attitudes he detected in the Italy of that epoch in terms of nature,

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morality, religious affairs, art and literature made him see it as inaugurating the modern era. It is important to realize that this idea of the Renaissance was formulated to stress the uniqueness of modern European culture, as something new on the face of human culture.

III. THE BEGINNING OF MODERN CULTURE

In formulating a beginning for modern culture, Burckhardt was also arguing that modern culture was not anything that occurred between the decline of the classical world and the Renaissance. Modernity has been famously defined as pathetic time awareness. It is fairly often referred to as the one spectacular rupture in the history of the race entailing rocketing irreversible shifts. Its birth is commonly admitted to have been in the making for a long time. The French *Annalystes* are not the only school to have reconsidered the length of the process. Daniel Milo, like, reputedly Jacques Le Goff, opines that the Middles Ages, and subsequently the Renaissance could be the beginning of modern institutions (Nelson, 1999).

As a matter of fact, modernity remains an elusive concept, for it may be understood in the trivial sense that every age is new in its time, yet, it may also carry implicit biases about the relationship between the recent (modernus) and ancient (antiqus). The Renaissance is commonly considered the point of transition between medieval and modern Europe, which is true enough if we consider "medieval" and "modern" to merely define chronological periods. Yet, errors propagate when we impose certain connotations of "modernity" into this historical relation. One such connotation is the view that the past is at best an embryonic state of modern society. While we may not find a modern or even proto-modern man in Petrarch, Castiglione or Montaigne, these thinkers reveal a notion of modernity that has some similarity to ours, even though the content of their thought is hardly an anticipation of what followed in later centuries. Their novel view of what is to be modern entailed a reassessment of one's relationship to other men, past and present. In this way, they may be credited with developing a modern sense of the self; it is not that their philosophical opinions or personalities were in any way modern, but their mode of introspection is identifiable with our own.

In recent decades, the advent of New Historicism among cultural historians, such as Stephen Greenblatt, has unwittingly revived the Burckhardt position. For the new historicists, the term "Renaissance" is a substitute for the "Early Modern", a historical period that encompasses all of European history from the Italian Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Like Burckhardt, too, they see the meaning and value of this period in relation to what follows, which is modernity (Howard, 1986) At some point, European culture broke with the past and emerged into the modern world. Like Burkhardt, new historicism places this beginning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Again the primary task of this category is to explain the present. However, these continuities with the medieval world are so pervasive that separating the Italian Renaissance/Early Modernity from the medieval world is an impossible task. The origins of the modern world are as fully rooted in the medieval world as they are in the Italian Renaissance.

In early modern Europe, concomitant with the engendering of new knowledge was the emergence of a new view of history and the past. The latter set such high standards and criteria of achievement and judgement that it became the "classic" one by which subsequent ages and cultures are measured. "The defining criteria for value were inescapably governed by past models, not by present experience or by future ideal states of existence" (Frykenberg, 1996).

Hence, also the corollary of historical didacticism, the idea that history, antique history in particular, is the *magister vitae*, the teacher of life with a clear charismatic purpose. In short, there arose a sharp sense of history, the awareness that the significance of the present was affected, defined, and governed by past contexts. As Michel de Certeau puts it, historical intelligibility was now established through a relation with the past as the other. This relation with the past gave rise to "epochocentricity", a lineal account of sequence, and an evaluation of a distinct period in terms of the sequential context (De certeau, 1988). Though there was a direct appeal towards the past and antique models, this meant under no circumstances a blind repetition of it. The fact that the past must be measured by the classical past also

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suggested their essential continuity; the former might be inferior, but it could improve simply by retrieving the old, since there was a qualitative uniformity bridging the gap. The Renaissance was the milestone on to the road to modern humanism, the eruption of the importance of man irreparably serving the intricate unity of the medieval web of life. Along the dark, narrow streets of the Middle Ages, sunny arcades, beside the impressive-directed Gothic architecture, grew humanly scaled towns buildings, squares and statues. Instead of "stiff figures and symbolic images, warm fully rounded human beings sprang to life on canvas" (Ferguson, 1989). To the discovery of the outward world, the Renaissance added a still greater achievement by bringing to light the full whole nature of man. This period gave the highest development to individuality. It, then, led the individual to the most zealous and thorough study of his self in all forms and under all conditions. The Renaissance was an intoxicating phase of humanism, an explosive confidence in the human mind and its achievement, the celebration of art, morals, thought, and life on an eminently human scale. It was twilight to the dignity and excellence of man and consequently a major and powerful contribution to modern western civilisation. "Man is the measure of all things", as Leon Battista Alberti, a typical early Renaissance thinker expressed it, "A man can do all things if he will" (Jarzanbek, 1990).

It was during the Renaissance that the word *Humanist* was coined. Initially, it only defined a concern for humanity. Many early humanists saw no dichotomy between this and their Christian faith. Yet, it was from the Renaissance that modern secular humanism grew with the development of an important split between reason and religion. Leonardo da Vinci might make a more promising model of primitive secularism, especially when he appears to challenge the Biblical account of the Flood. He even spoke disparagingly of the love of money and the flesh (Lindscott, 1957) The Renaissance Church became a secular institution in this period, shedding its spiritual roots with insatiable greed for material wealth and temporal power. Indeed, the greatest of all European institutions, the Roman Church, in which Europeans had lived for centuries, fell into neglect under Renaissance popes, whose fall from spiritual grace sparkled the Reformation. In science, Galileo's support of the Copernican revolution upset the church's adherence to the theories of Aristotle exposing them as false. Indeed, of all the changes that swept over Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the most widely influential was an epistemological transformation we call "the scientific revolution".

In the popular mind, we associate this revolution with natural science and technological change. However, the scientific revolution was, in reality, a series of changes in the structure of Europe including doubt, empirical and sensory verification, the abstraction of human knowledge into separate sciences and the view that the world functions like a machine. These changes greatly changed the human experience of every other aspect of life, from the individual life to that of the group. This modification in world view can also be charted in painting sculpture, and architecture. People of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were looking at the world very differently. The scientific revolution did not happen once, nor did it begin at any set date. Realistically speaking, the scientific revolution that we associate with Galileo, Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton began much earlier. We can push the date back to the work of Nicolaus Copernicus and the Italian Leonardo da Vinci in the middle of the fifteenth century.

During the Middle Ages, there was a great scientific revolution, that in many ways, rivalled the later scientific revolution in sweeping changes, but all the cultural components were not in place. In the high Middle Ages, Europeans believed that the centre of all truth was in God and that an over wearing concern with material phenomena was a serious neglect of one's soul and one's dependence on God. The medievalists also deeply distrusted human perception. Not only was human perception variable and untrustworthy, the material world itself was deceptive. Rather than a vehicle for truth, the material world was put in place to actively distract humans from the real task of living the sort of life that would get you into heaven. The introduction of humanism in the Renaissance was in large part based on the idea that human intellect and creativity were trustworthy and human experience was, to some extent, a reliable base on which to hang knowledge.

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IV. A PROGRESS IN SCIENTIFIC ARTS

One of the most important aspects of modernity is the encouragement of advance or progress in sciences and arts. Revolutions in science and technology have been no less influential than political revolutions in changing the shape of the modern world. The scientific revolution beginning with the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo and culminating in Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1685) changed the way in which educated people looked at the natural world. Indeed, the scientific revolution was nothing less than a revolution in the way the individual perceives the world. As such, the revolution changed man's thinking process. It was an intellectual revolution, a revolution in human knowledge.

Even more than Renaissance scholars who discovered man and nature, the scientific revolutionaries: Copernicus, Galilee, and Newton attempted to understand and explain man and the natural world. Thinkers such as the Polish astronomer Copernicus, the French philosopher René Descartes and the British mathematician Isaac Newton overturned the authority of the Middle Ages and the classical world. In his book, *The Origins of Modern Science*, Herbert Batterfield wrote that: "The revolution in science overturned the authority in not only the Middle Ages but of the ancient world. It ended not only in the eclipse of scholastic philosophy but in the destruction of Aristotelian physics" (Butterfield, 1962). The new focus on nature was a direct result of the collapse of the Christian matrix and this was the result of a combination of forces which produced intellectual change. So monumental were his achievements in cosmology, the scientific revolution could almost have been called the Copernican Revolution. Being an exceptional Renaissance man, Copernicus determined that the sun was at the centre of the cosmos and that the earth moved challenging the geocentrism of Ptolemy with his own heliocentric universe. In his book, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, he declares that:

> We hesitate to grant (the earth) the motion which accords naturally with its form, rather than attribute a movement to the entire universe whose limit we do not and cannot know? And why should we not admit, with regard to the daily rotation, that the appearance belongs to the heavens, but the reality is in the earth? (Copernicus, 1972).

The Renaissance mentality stood at a point midway between medieval supernaturalism and the modern scientific and critical attitude. Medievalists see humanism as the terminal product of the Middle Ages. Modern historians are perhaps more apt to view humanism as the germinal period of modernism (Baron, 1966) Most probably, we can assume that the man of the Renaissance lived, as it were, between two worlds: the world of the medieval Christian matrix, in which the significance of every phenomenon was ultimately determined through uniform points of view, no longer existed for him. On the other hand, he had not yet found himself suspended between faith and reason. As the grip of medieval naturalism began to diminish, secular and human interests became more prominent. The facts of individual experience in the here and now became more interesting than that shadowy afterlife reliance upon faith and God weakened. The present world became an end in itself instead of simply a preparation for a world to come. Indeed, as the age of Renaissance humanism wore on, the distinction between the world (the city of man) and the next (the city of God) tended to disappear. Beauty was believed to afford, at least, some glimpse of a transcendental existence. This goes for to explain the humanist cult of beauty and makes plain that humanism was, above everything else, fundamentally an aesthetic movement. Man, himself, tended to become the practical measure of all things. In the later Middle Ages, urban intellectuals were well on the road to the recovery of an aesthetic and secular view of life even before the full tide of the classical revival was left. It was only natural, then, that pagan literature, with its emotional and intellectual affinity to the new world view, should accelerate the existing drift toward secularism and stimulate the cult of humanity and the worship of humanity.

The intellectuals of antiquity like Sir Thomas More, and Desiderus Erasmus, in contrast to the Christians, were relatively unconcerned about the supernatural world and the eternal destiny of the soul. They were primarily interested in a happy, adequate and efficient life here on earth. Hellenic philosophy was designed to teach man how to live successfully rather

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than how to die with the assurance of ultimate salvation. Humanism directly and indirectly revived the pagan scale of virtues. When men like Petrarch and his fellow humanists read pagan literature, they were infected with the secular outlook of the Greeks and Romans. Even rather pious humanists became enamoured of what Augustine branded "the city of man" (Hankins, 2000) Petrarch, a devout Christian worshipped the pagan eclecticism of Cicero. Erasmus suggested that such titles as St Socrates and St Cicero were not sacrilegious and openly preferred the pagans to the school men. "Whatever is pious and conduces to good manners ought not to be called profane", he wrote.

The first place must indeed be given to the authority of the scriptures; but nevertheless I sometimes find some things said or written by the ancients, nay even by the heathens, nay by the poets themselves, so chastely, so holily, and so divinely, that I cannot persuade myself but that, when they wrote them, they were divinely inspired and perhaps the spirit of Christ diffuses itself father than we imagine and that there are more saints than we have in our catalogue (…) To confess freely among friends, I can't read Cicero on Old Age on Friendship (…) without kissing the book, without veneration towards the divine soul. And on the contrary, when I read some of our modern authors, treating of politics, economics, and ethics, good God! How cold they are in comparison with these! Nay, how do they seem to be insensible of what they write themselves! So that I had rather lose Scotus and twenty more such as he, than one Cicero or Plutarch. Not that I am wholly against them either; but because by the reading of the one, I find myself become better, whereas I rise from the other, I know not how coldly affected to virtue, but most violently inclined to cavil and contention (Rummel, 1990).

V. THE RENAISSANCE AND THE IDEA OF THE SELF

A modern-centred-humanist essentialist idea of the "self" emerged; The Renaissance served crucial ideological functions. As a matter of fact, there is symmetry between the Renaissance and our late twentieth century. We are much better off to follow Antonio Gramsci and Foucault in positing not a single ruling ideology or episteme for an era, but a series of complex shifting, political coalitions, discourses, and ideologies at work over centuries to follow the Frankfurt school in understanding an ideology such as humanism as multivalent, changing and contradictory, much more a site of contestation than stability. What is true of humanism is obviously true for the movements and reconstitutions of subjectivity over several centuries. Stephen Greenblatt provides a more workable model of the history of the self in cautiously endorsing Jacob Burckhardt's classic position that both the concept and the structure of the self were transformed and became "modern", that is post-medieval in some general sense during the Renaissance even though the self has continued to have a history and has gone through different phases and ideological representations throughout the long modern period (Greenblatt, 2005). Over the past few decades, scholars have approached the problem of the emergence of the modern self from a variety of perspectives. The most influential and innovative treatment of the Renaissance self is found in the work of Stephen Greenblatt and, most notably, in his now classic study *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. The latter has proven enormously influential. This is especially true in Greenblatt's own field of literature, where his ideas have been fundamental for the development of New Historicism, a critical movement that, in its reaction against the formalist or idealist readings of the New Criticism, has sought to read literary texts as cultural artefacts or practices, dialectically related to the specific cultural, social, and political contexts in which they were written.

In addition, and what is decisive here, the New Historicists also view the self, like a text, not as an autonomous entity but rather as a site on which broader institutional and political forces are inscribed. Self-fashioning has become a central theme in the exploration of Renaissance and early modern culture generally (Ibid). On many levels, this development is not surprising. As a descriptive category, self-fashioning seems to capture much of what is popularly believed about Renaissance life. As Greenblatt notes,

The simplest observation we can make is that in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human

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identity as a manipulable, artful process. Such self –consciousness hide been widespread among the elite in the classical world, but Christianity brought a growing suspicion of man's power to shape identity. As a term for the action or process of making for particular features of appearance, for a distinct style or pattern, the word had been long in use, but it is in the sixteenth century, that FASHION seems to come into wide currency (…) But, more significantly for our purposes, fashioning may suggest the achievement of a less tangible shape; a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving (Ibid, 14)

Greenblatt's renaissance Self-Fashioning offers a view of the self as a cultural artefact generated by the economic, social, religious, and political upheavals of the Renaissance. Greenblatt's project, in short, has contributed in decisive ways to a new historiography of the self. Like other historicists, Greenblatt sees the self not as a free, autonomous subject, but rather as subjected to the codes of culture and power, or what Greenblatt calls "the cultural poetics" of a particular set of cultural, political, and social relations. Identity is shaped from the outside. As Louis Adrian Montrose has written, "The freely self-creating and world-creating individual of so-called bourgeois humanism is –at least in theory—now defunct." (Montrose, 2006) Above all, self-fashioning appears to make sense of a world in which the court was central to literary life—for this was a world in which prudent accommodation and even deception were often seen as virtues.

Indeed, the Renaissance world was a theatrical age—an age of masks, of masquerades, of role playing, of the studies nonchalance of *sprezzatura* (ease of manner in style or performance) even of "honest dissimulation". Clearly, at least among the privileged orders, man and women were often conscious of fashioning particular selves in order to survive or advance in the high-stakes world of court society (Ibid, 15). Stephen Greenblatt's contention that "the subject of psychoanalysis—'our' subjectivity—is ultimately a product of the Renaissance" (Durham, 2000). For Pye, however, this is precisely what makes psychoanalysis so revealing in relation to early modernity. In Shakespeare's *Perjured Eye*, Fineman argues, as the guiding principle of his project, that:

modernist—and for the matter, postmodernist –theories of the self are not so much a theoretical account or explanation of subjectivity as they are the conclusion of literary subjectivity initially invented in the Renaissance (…) Shakespeare marks the beginning of the modernist self and Freud (…) its end, the two of them thus bracketing an epoch of subjectivity (Fineman, 1986).

In his book, *Passage to Modernity*, Louis Dupré discusses the roots, development and impact of modern thought, tracing the fundamental principles of modernity to the late fourteenth century Renaissance affirming that modernity is still an influential force in contemporary culture (Dupre, 1993). Dupré deems that the combination of late medieval theology and early Italian humanism shattered the transitional synthesis that had united cosmic human and transcendent components in a comprehensive idea of nature. Early Renaissance humanism transformed the traditional worldview by its unprecedented emphasis on human creativity. The self emerged as the sole source of meaning while nature was reduced to an object and transcendence withdrew into a "supernatural realm". Dupré rightly retorts: "Indeed, but the more valuable heritage of the past consists in the vital promises it holds for the future" (Ibid, 248). He proceeds to conclude his insightful treatment of modernity as follows:

> Modernity is an event that has transformed the relation between the cosmos, its transcendent sources, and its human interpreter. To explain this as the outcome of historical precedents is to ignore its most significant quality-namely-, its success in rendering all rival views of the real obsolete. Its innovative power made of modernity, which began as a local Western phenomenon, a universal project capable of forcing its theoretical and practical principles on all but the most isolated civilizations (Ibid, 249).

VI. CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, renaissance ideals for the individual have profoundly influenced modern thought and thinkers like Nietzsche. It contributed to the liberal, permissive and anti-Christian philosophical

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approach which underpins much of modern life in Europe and America today. Indeed, the Renaissance hymn for Man forgrounded Nietzsche's modern theory of *Ubermensch*, or "superman" idea. Nietzsche constantly championed ancient Greece and Italian Renaissance paradigm of strong vigorous cultures. His strategy was to choose past ideals which could serve as models or norms for future "greatness". Greek and Renaissance cultures developed science and technology. They were highly aesthetic and produced strong individuals. These ideals, Nietzsche believed, were concentrated in strong individuals like *Julius Caesar* and the "great men" of the Renaissance (Nietzsche, 2002). The critical theory of the Frankfurt School which was based on the fundamental rejection of conditions degrading to human dignity and spirit; conditions with which the individual must not be reconciled, had been partly influenced by the philosopher Nietzsche.

The Nazi concept of a European *Herrenmenschen*, or "Master Race" in the twentieth century believed in what a pure human will to create in the cosmos. Nietzsche had written, "once you said "God" when you gazed upon distant seas: but now I have taught you today Ubermensch (…) you could transform yourselves into forefathers and ancestors of the Ubermensch (…)" (Nietzche, 2006).Nietzsche's concept of the Ubermensch, or the *Overman* who constitutes a higher form of human being can be seen as a typically 'modern' idea, as expressive of the modern will to development, growth and innovation; an ancient pre-modern stage. Zarathrustra, however, is Nietzsche's chosen figure for the teacher of the Ubermensch and championing of the cultural warrior, the noble of the spirit, the artist philosopher can be read as a replication of ancient Renaissance ideals.

I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome (…) All beings so far have created something beyond themselves. Behold I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth (…) man is a rope tied between the beast and overman- a rope over an abyss (…) What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end. What can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a going under (…) (Ibid, 3).

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