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The "Renaissance" in Recent Thought: Fifteen Years of Interpretation

DE LAMAR JENSEN*

"There was a time once—or at least I *think* there was—" mused scholar John L. Lievsay recently at a gathering of historians and literary critics in Washington, D. C., "when a man might innocently use the term 'the Renaissance' to refer to a reasonably well-defined single phase, however involute its composition, in the history of Western-world culture. And no one would have argued, seriously, that the expression was other than a general synonym for the sixteenth century. Nowadays, all that is changed. In an unguarded moment one says, as though it were a naughty word, 'Renaissance'—and is instantly challenged. Just what does he think he is talking about?"¹

The confusion and frustration resulting from contradictory interpretations of the Renaissance may not be quite as extreme as Professor Lievsay suggests, but no one can deny the dilemma of today's reader when he is confronted with such a potpourri of renascences, renaissances, and prenaissances. The present study is an attempt to make the idea of the Renaissance a little clearer and more meaningful to the general reader through an examination of some of its recent interpretative literature.² It is also intended to show that, in spite of the infinite variety and divergency of contemporary views, there are some striking

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¹"A Later Level of the Italian Renaissance," in *Society & History in the Renaissance*. A Report of a Conference Held at the Folger Library on April 23 & 24, 1960 (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1960), p. 50.

²Bibliographical articles on the concept of "Renaissance" are available, but none of them cover the period of this study. See, for example, Henry S. Lucas, "The Renaissance: a Review of Some Views," *Catholic Historical Review*, XXXV (1950), 377-407; Antonio Antelo Iglesias, "El concepto de renacimiento," *Bolívar* (Bogotá), XIX (1953), 637-59; Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," in *Facets of the Renaissance* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1959), 1-18; and especially Franco Simone, "Nuovi contributi alla storia del termine e del concetto di 'Renaissance,'" *Studi Francesi*, II (1958), 353-78, III (1959), 390-411.

similarities in these views concerning the nature and meaning of the Renaissance. Indeed, one might even discern if not a direction in these writings at least an orientation reflecting both the rising standards of scholarship and the growing interdependence of academic disciplines. For the Renaissance scholar—whether he is historian, art critic, or poet—just as for the statesman, businessman, or cleric, understanding and cooperation have become vital in our shrinking world.

I.

The logical starting point for any contemporary study of Renaissance historiography is Wallace K. Ferguson's *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (1948). Ferguson's lucid and critical analysis of the evolution of the "Renaissance" has made this almost a modern classic, but it is also important for another reason. Implicit throughout the work, and specifically stated near the end, is Ferguson's own interpretation of the Renaissance. It is this aspect of his study—although it has not met with the same acclamation as the more descriptive parts—that has exercised a great influence on Renaissance interpretations of the last fifteen years.

Ferguson's view, suggested as early as 1940, is that "the Renaissance grew out of the Middle Ages and was a period of gradual transition" which began "when the new urban and secular elements in European culture began to weigh down the balance against the feudal and ecclesiastical elements which had dominated the civilization of the Middle Ages."³ Here he emphasized the idea that the Renaissance was not a method nor an outlook, but *a period of time*, distinct in many ways from the medieval because of the essential differences in the social structure of the two eras. In *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, he again suggested the idea of a transitional period of time between the Middle Ages and the Modern world, and declared that the greatest need for future Renaissance scholarship was that of working out a new and up-to-date synthesis, based upon the detailed analysis of the many aspects of this period. "I do not mean to imply," he explained, "that historians should seek to discover anew the 'spirit of the Renaissance' in the sense of a *Zeitgeist* that will serve as the key to open all doors. My insistence upon the value of synthesis

³Ferguson, *The Renaissance* (New York: Henry Holt, 1940), p. 8.

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rests simply upon a conviction, which may be in essence an act of faith, that the events of the past are not isolated phenomena, that history is not a meaningless chaos of unrelated facts."⁴

In 1951 Ferguson further elaborated his conception of the Renaissance, suggesting not only its general characteristics, but also its location in time, which he rather arbitrarily places between the years 1300 and 1600.⁵ He then described this period as the transition from a civilization that was predominantly feudal, ecclesiastical, and agrarian to one that was predominantly national, urban, and secular, with its economic center of gravity shifted from agriculture to commerce and industry. "It is, indeed, the distinguishing characteristic of these centuries that they are neither medieval nor modern, but represent a transitional stage *which has a character of its own.*"⁶ This is the *leitmotif* which runs through much of contemporary Renaissance literature.

In recent years there have been many general histories of the period which might fall somewhere into the category of synthesis, but only two of these can be considered here. The most direct attempt to synthesize and integrate the cultural, political, and economic features of the Italian Renaissance into a meaningful historical interpretation is Denys Hay's *The Italian Renaissance in Its Historical Background*. Hay confesses his belief in the existence of a "Renaissance" between the mid-fourteenth and early eighteenth centuries and his acceptance of the view that it occurred first in Italy and then spread to the rest of Europe. Proposing to describe the "style of living," in the Renaissance, he succeeds in sketching an incomplete but

⁴Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), p. 391.

⁵Ferguson, "The Interpretation of the Renaissance: Suggestions for a Synthesis," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XII (1951), 486-88; also "The Church in a Changing World: A Contribution to the Interpretation of the Renaissance," *American Historical Review*, LIX (1953), p. 2.

⁶*Ibid.* Italics mine. At a 1952 Metropolitan Museum of Art symposium he explained that the distinctiveness of the period consists in "the uneasy coexistence within it of medieval and modern elements, of decaying or obsolescent institutions and ways of thinking, together with new institutions and ideas still imperfectly formed." "Toward the Modern State," *The Renaissance: A Symposium* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1953), reprinted in *The Renaissance: Six Essays* (New York: Harper, 1962), p. 4. Also see his 1956 Arensberg lecture, "The Interpretation of the Renaissance," esp. p. 16. Ferguson's interpretation has had many supporters in the past fifteen years, both conscious and unintentional. The most succinct summary of the "transitional" idea is Giorgio de Santillana's observation that "All eras are of transition, but some are more transitional than most." *The Age of Adventure: The Renaissance Philosophers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 9.

suggestive portrait of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy with emphasis on both the continuity and the uniqueness of the period. He quickly admits the persistence of medieval attitudes, techniques, and institutions, but maintains that "when these and a thousand similar points are allowed for there is still a difference in the style of living between the Renaissance and both what came before and what came after."⁷

From this premise, Professor Hay illustrates the composite yet distinctive nature of Renaissance life. Politically it was the age of theoretical and practical dynastic monarchy wedded to the urban middle class as contrasted with both the medieval world of decentralized landed magnates and with the post-Renaissance period dominated by parliamentarianism and bourgeois political values. In economics too the Renaissance stood between medieval agrarianism and the modern world of heavy industry. "It was a world of banks yet without bank-notes; of commerce without industry; of enormous financial operations in an atmosphere almost devoid of financial security; where one had capital, so to speak, without capitalism; where town and country were almost evenly matched in economic importance; where money might be made in a hundred and one ways, but where the only long-term investment was land."⁸ Further examples are drawn from its religious and cultural characteristics, which Hay describes as "essentially lay and yet essentially Christian." or what he calls "secularly religious," referring specifically to the Brethren of the Common Life, the Christian humanists, and to the Jesuits. In literature the Renaissance is marked by a balance between the vernaculars and classical Latin, and in art a concern for both realism and decoration.

Above all, Hay insists that the Renaissance was *not* the prototype of the modern world any more than it was a continuation of the Middle Ages.

What has the Renaissance contributed to the railway engine, the aeroplane, mass education and the ideal of popular government? We live in a world where Latin letters are

⁷Denys Hay, *The Italian Renaissance in Its Historical Background* (London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 2.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 19. Whereas Hay underrates the role of technology in the Renaissance and neglects the effects of geographical expansion and discovery, Sir George Clark, in his shorter *Early Modern Europe from about 1450 to about 1720* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), emphasizes these as primary characteristics of the Renaissance.

remote from our present anxieties and pleasures, where even our art and architecture have left the norms set up in the sixteenth century. Beyond that we live, for better and for worse, in one world. . . . This is all very different from earlier ages when the traditional geographical limits of Europe represented the furthest bounds of most European activity.⁹

In 1963, the long-awaited Ferguson synthesis finally appeared. His claims for his latest book, *Europe in Transition, 1300-1520*,¹⁰ are more modest than that, but it is apparent that between the covers of this 625-page general history of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries he has carefully woven together the essential features of his conception of the Renaissance: Sociological evolution from an agrarian to an urban society, political transition to the territorial state, artistic and intellectual emergence of the "Renaissance man." Yet the format and treatment of subject matter are on the whole disappointing. It is largely narrative history falling somewhere between a real interpretative synthesis and a detailed survey text. Furthermore, by treating the "civilization of Western Europe as a whole" during the little more than two centuries from 1300 to 1520, Ferguson is forced to make the Renaissance embrace and encompass such unlikely bedfellows as the Hundred Years' War, French feudal chivalry, and the Angevin monarchy in England. Nevertheless, this welcomed study is a valuable addition to recent Renaissance literature, providing a much-needed college text and at the same time a comprehensive summary of the political, economic, and cultural life of Europe in the "age of transition."

II.

Early in the period under discussion, Nino Valeri published his great study of Renaissance Italian politics, *L'Italia nell'età dei principati dal 1343 al 1516*, in which he traced the long struggle between Milan and the other city-states of northern and central Italy, culminating in the erection of a precariously balanced Italian states system by the middle of the fifteenth

⁹Hay, *The Renaissance*, p. 14. See also his "Burckhardt's 'Renaissance': 1860-1960," *History Today*, X (1960), 14-23. What really characterizes the modern world, he asserts there, is "technology, mass media of communication, and—as an idea or ideology universally accepted, if not universally applied—'government of the people by the people,'" p. 23. Cf. Mario M. Rossi, "Note sulla modernità del Rinascimento," *Nuova Rivista Storica*, XXXIV (1950), 1-32.

¹⁰(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963).

century. Unlike Luigi Simeoni's well-known history of the same year,¹¹ Valeri views that conflict, particularly in its effect upon Florence, as a prime factor in shaping the culture and the entire intellectual outlook of the Renaissance. For Valeri the civic consciousness engendered by the Milanese wars was the bridge dividing fifteenth-century Italian "social" culture from its individualistic antecedents of the fourteenth.¹²

Valeri's theme received its most adept and detailed exposition (though apparently arrived at independently) by the eminent Renaissance scholar Hans Baron. In 1953, continuing two decades of important contributions, he published a lengthy article focusing attention on the repercussions of the alliance of "liberty-loving" Florence with Venice against despotic Milan. "Out of the struggle had come the decision that the road was to remain open to the civic freedom, and to the system of independent states, which became a part of the civilization of the Italian Renaissance."¹³ Baron's interpretation of the Milanese defeat as a victory for freedom rather than as a defeat for national unity became the starting-point for a new interpretation of both the scope and the nature of the Renaissance. It was the coexistence of republican and monarchical states side by side in a working balance of power, says Baron, which provided the basis of Renaissance culture, and in a sense made Italy of the fifteenth century the prototype of the modern world.¹⁴

Closely related to this interpretation is Garrett Mattingly's view of Renaissance diplomacy. Certainly in the objectives, organization, and the techniques of diplomacy, Renaissance Italy *was* the model and teacher of the rest of Europe and, to

¹¹*La Signorie, 1313-1559*, 2 vols. (Milan: Francesco Vallardi, 1950).

¹²Nino Valeri, *L'Italia nell'età dei principati* (Verona: Arnaldo Mondadori, 1950), pp. 263-65. For a contrasting view of the early Renaissance, emphasizing its ruthlessness and cynicism, see Edmond-René Labande, *L'Italie de la Renaissance: Duecento, Trecento, Quattrocento* (Paris: Payot, 1954).

¹³Hans Baron, "A Struggle for Liberty in the Renaissance: Florence, Venice and Milan in the Early Quattrocento," *American Historical Review*, LVIII (1953), 265-89, 544-70, quote p. 289. Two years later he published his closely reasoned and carefully documented capstone, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955). On Baron's monumental work see Gennaro Sasso, "Florentina libertas e Rinascimento italiano nell'opera di Hans Baron," *Rivista Storica Italiano*, LXIX (1957), 250-76; and G. Radetti, "Le origini dell'umanesimo civile fiorentino nel Quattrocento," *Giornale Critica di Filosofia Italiana*, XXXVIII (1959), 98-122.

¹⁴Baron, "Burckhardt's 'Civilization of the Renaissance' a Century after Its Publication," *Renaissance News*, XIII (1960), 207-22, esp. pp. 221-22.

a degree, of the world. According to Mattingly, the same struggle in northern and central Italy against the expanding power of Milan, which provides the key to Baron's interpretation, also gave birth to modern diplomacy.

Although all civilizations of which we have any record have had some set of diplomatic institutions, ours took a turn some time after 1400 which differentiated it from all other sets in history. This new development seemed to be a characteristic symptom of the new power relations of the nascent modern world. . . . Resident embassies, the distinguishing feature, were an Italian invention. They were fully developed in Italy by the 1450's and spread thence, like other Renaissance innovations, to the rest of Europe around 1500. And like other Renaissance innovations, they continued to develop along the lines laid down throughout the period which ended in 1914, so that their first stage may also properly be called the beginning of modern diplomacy.¹⁵

This "new diplomacy," created in Italy during the first half of the fifteenth century, was the expression of a new kind of state, unknown in the Middle Ages and still only partially developed by the sixteenth century.¹⁶

While rejecting Ferguson's early periodization, and preferring to call the Renaissance a change of phase rather than a change in kind, Mattingly adheres to a modified "transition" view. "I use it" [the term "Renaissance"], he explained at a 1960 symposium, "for the critical phase of the transition from the unified, hierarchically ordered, spiritually oriented society of Latin Christendom, to the heterogeneous, secularly oriented society of autonomous sovereign states which make up modern Europe."¹⁷

As our attention moves from the fifteenth into the sixteenth century and from Italy into the rest of Europe, we become aware of further changes in outlook and emphasis. Traditionally the Italian Renaissance has been explained in

¹⁵Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), pp. 11-12.

¹⁶Mattingly, "Changing Attitudes towards the State During the Renaissance," *Facets of the Renaissance*, pp. 19-40.

¹⁷Mattingly, "Some Revisions of the Political History of the Renaissance," in Tinsley Helton (ed.), *The Renaissance: A Reconsideration of the Theories and Interpretations of the Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 11. On that University of Wisconsin symposium see Riccardo Fubini, "Un recente convegno sul Rinascimento a cent'anni dalla pubblicazione dell'opera di Jacob Burckhardt," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XXV (1963), 408-26.

terms of the bourgeois city-states.¹⁸ But, according to some students of the period, this was no longer the prevailing structure in many areas by the late fifteenth century. David Hicks suggests, for example, that a new society was emerging in Siena at the end of the century which was dominated not by the urban-centered bourgeoisie but by a new aristocracy basing its wealth and power on agriculture and political privilege, a nobility "possessing a curious resemblance to the petty feudal aristocracy the middle classes had displaced two and a half centuries before."¹⁹ This new emphasis on the importance and the strength of the nobility, especially in northern Europe, has been underlined by J. H. Hexter, who points out that the Renaissance nobility, far from being decadent as is traditionally assumed, took the lead in cultural matters and in university education. This was in sharp contrast to the medieval nobleman who was "uneducated and proud of it." "A revaluation of our whole conception of social ideas, social structure, and social function in Europe in the age of the Renaissance is long overdue," challenges Hexter, and suggests that we start our revision "by thinking in terms not of the decline of the aristocracy but of its reconstruction."²⁰

This challenge has been eagerly accepted by many scholars. In a short article appearing in 1957, J. Russell Major indicated his support of the thesis that "the states of this period differed enough from what had gone before and what was to come after, to constitute a definite period in history."²¹ Major illustrates his premises by describing the Renaissance monarchy of France as a decentralized dynastic institution characterized by an emphasis on legitimacy and legality, by uncertain boundaries and jurisdictions, lack of a national army, lack of bureaucratic machinery, and by its heavy reliance for support upon the people and representative assemblies. In a more recent article he has shown that French monarchs ruled according to

¹⁸This view was recently emphasized in an article by D. Maland, in which he outlined the ways urban life had caused changes in the social patterns which in turn gave birth to the cultural Renaissance. "The Italian Renaissance: A Problem of Interpretation," *History*, XLIV (1959), 115-23.

¹⁹David L. Hicks, "Sienese Society in the Renaissance," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, II (1960), 412.

²⁰"The Education of the Aristocracy in the Renaissance," *Journal of Modern History*, XXII (1950), 1-20, reprinted in his *Reappraisals in History* (London: Longmans, 1961), pp. 45-70.

²¹J. Russell Major, "The Renaissance Monarchy: A Contribution to the Periodization of History," *Emory University Quarterly*, XIII (1957), 112-24.

law, that they accepted the inevitable decentralization of the state, and that they were inherently weak. He points out, furthermore, that the most dynamic elements in the society of the time were not the middle classes, but the nobility. Finally, he declares that the Renaissance monarchy had an end as well as a beginning, that it was a transitional phase rather than the beginning of the modern state. "It is my belief," he concludes, "that the economic crisis and the Thirty Years' War brought the French Renaissance monarchy to an end and led to changes as important as those brought on by the Hundred Years' War and the economic crisis of 1330-1450 [which marked its beginning]." ²²

III.

During the last fifteen years, a controversy—which began in the previous decade—over the economic conditions in the Renaissance blossomed into a full-scale academic war. Only in the last two or three years have the various parties appeared to be reaching some sort of *modus vivendi*.

At the 1950 meeting of the International Congress of Historical Sciences, held in Paris, Michael Postan spoke convincingly for the economic revisionists when he affirmed that economic contraction and depression characterized most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, making it impossible to call the Renaissance a period of prosperity as has been done traditionally. ²³ In subsequent articles Postan has shown—through the use of wage data, land values, rents, and production rates—that population, trade, silver mining, grain production, and cloth production all declined markedly in fourteenth and

²²Major, "The French Renaissance Monarchy as Seen through the Estates General," *Studies in the Renaissance*, IX (1962), 114. This thesis is further developed in his *Representative Institutions in Renaissance France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), esp. Chap. 1. Cf. also his "The Crown and the Aristocracy in Renaissance France," *American Historical Review*, LXIX (1964), 631-45. In 1956 the great Italian scholar, Frederico Chabod, pointed out several of these characteristics of the Renaissance state, such as personalism and dynasticism, but placed more importance than does Major on the strength and loyalty of the bureaucracy. "Y a-t-il un état de la Renaissance?" *Actes du Colloque sur la Renaissance* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958), pp. 57-74.

²³Michael Postan, "Rapport: Histoire économique, Moyen Age," *IX^e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* (Paris: A. Colin, 1950), I, 225-41, II, 110-14. See also E. Perroy, "Les crises du XIV^e siècle," *Annales*, IV (1949); Corrado Barbagallo, "La crisi economico-sociale dell'Italia della Rinascimento," *Nuova Rivista Storica*, XXXIV (1950), 389-411, XXXV (1951), 1-38; and especially Enrico Fiume, "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, CXV (1957), 385-439; CXVI (1958), 443-510; CXVII (1959), 427-502.

fifteenth century England.²⁴ Several other prominent economic historians have added their weight to the growing body of opinion that the Renaissance was a period of economic decline and stagnation rather than of prosperity.

In a recent symposium, Robert Sabatino Lopez spelled out in greater detail the meaning of this economic decline. There was a sharp population drop in the mid-fourteenth century, especially in the cities; impediments to trade routes, war, and disease contributed to spreading famine and unrest; increasing tax burdens; shrinkage of markets; drop in land prices and the abandoning of much arable land; urban industries declined, commerce was depressed, and interest rates dropped. These factors, he argues, hit the hardest in Italy and at the very time of the cultural Renaissance. He concludes, however, that due to the absence of economic opportunities in Italy the businessmen and aristocrats of the time invested their money in culture rather than in trade and industry. "Statesmen who had tried to build up their power and prestige by enlarging their estates now vied with one another to gather works of art. Businessmen who had been looking for the most profitable or the most conservative investments in trade now invested in books."²⁵ Thus economic stagnation contributed positively to the Renaissance cultural vitality.

A few months later another prominent and respected economic historian, Armando Sapori, delivered a paper in Florence, Italy, which has had repercussions in subsequent interpretations. Sapori showed that a true economic expansion took place in the twelfth century but that this vitality had spent itself by the time of the classical Renaissance and had in fact been re-

²⁴"Some Economic Evidence of Declining Population in the Later Middle Ages," *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., II (1950), 221-46. "The Trade of Medieval Europe: the North," *The Cambridge Economic History*, vol. II (Cambridge, 1952), 191-216. Cf. W. C. Robinson, "Money, Population, and Economic Change in Late Medieval Europe," *The Economic History Review*, XII (1959), 63-82; and most recently, Emil Lucki, *History of the Renaissance: Book I, Economy and Society* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1963).

²⁵R. S. Lopez, "Hard Times and Investment in Culture," *The Renaissance: A Symposium*, pp. 19-34. Cf. also R. S. Lopez and H. A. Miskimin, "The Economic Depression of the Renaissance," *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XIV (1962), 408-26. In 1960, Ferguson wrote that the economic depression, which he was finally ready to concede, actually accelerated the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. As a result, the wealth that remained became concentrated in fewer hands than before, thereby making the cultural revival possible. "Recent Trends in the Economic Historiography of the Renaissance," *Studies in the Renaissance*, VIII (1960), 7-26.

placed by recession in most areas of economic activity.²⁶ In a later essay, Sapori proposed a new periodization for the entire Renaissance. Postulating that the economic revival of the twelfth century was the basis for the cultural and intellectual activity of the Renaissance, he suggested moving the usual boundaries of the Renaissance back to include all of the period presently referred to as the High Middle Ages and making of it an integrated period of some five centuries lying between the Middle Ages and modern times.²⁷

Although there are few economic historians now who uphold the older view that Renaissance Europe was a time of unbounded economic prosperity, there are many who question the extent and nature of the depression. Carlo M. Cipolla, for example, maintains that an economic recovery began at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth, and compares fifteenth-century Italy with the expanding frontier in America with its new areas of land opening, canal development, and rural investment. Even population, according to Cipolla, began to increase in the fifteenth century.²⁸ At the International Congress of Historical Sciences, held at Rome in 1955, the Soviet economic historian, E. A. Kosminsky, was the most persistent defender of the view that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries constituted a period of

²⁶Armando Sapori, "Il problema economica," *Il Rinascimento, significato e limiti*. Atti del III convegno internazionale sul Rinascimento (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1953), pp. 107-32.

²⁷Sapori, "Moyen Age et Renaissance vus d'Italie. Pour un remainiement des périodes historiques," *Annales*, XI (1956), 433-57; and in a slightly revised form a year later in "Medioevo e Rinascimento: Spunti per una diversa periodizzazione," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, CXV (1957), 135-64. Cf. Delio Cantimori, "Il problema rinascimentale proposto da Armando Sapori," *Studi in onore de Armando Sapori* (Milan: Cisalpino, 1957), II, 935-47, and in *Studi de storia* (Florence: Giulio Einaudi, 1959), 361-78; Nino Valeri, "La polemica sul Rinascimento nell'opera di Armando Sapori," *Nuova Rivista Storica*, XLVI (1963), 187-94; and E. F. Jacob, "La periodizzazione dell'età del Rinascimento nella storia d'Italia e in quella d'Europa," *X Congresso Internazionale de Scienze Storiche* (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), IV, 335-63.

²⁸Carlo M. Cipolla, "The Trends in Italian Economic History in the Later Middle Ages," *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., II (1949), 182; also his *Storia de Milano* (Milan: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri, 1957), and "Per la storia della terre della 'bassa' Lombarda," in *Studi in onor e di Armando Sapori*, I, 655 ff. Douglas Dowd follows Cipolla in showing that, in Lombardy at least, agriculture experienced a revival in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. "The Economic Expansion of Lombardy, 1300-1500," *Journal of Economic History*, XXI (1961), 143-60. M. Mollat points out that there was enormous regional variation in Renaissance economy but on the whole Europe witnessed a definite revival and expansion from the middle of the fifteenth century on, and in Italy it began earlier. "Y a-t-il une économie de la Renaissance?" *Actes du colloque sur la Renaissance* (Paris, 1958), pp. 37-48.

economic progress. Adhering closely to the Marxist interpretation, Kosminsky insisted that the fifteenth century falls logically into place as a step in the evolution of modern capitalism.²⁹

The published contributions of the last two or three years seem to express a greater moderation in the claims for both sides and point toward a recognition that neither depression nor prosperity were universal in the Renaissance. Gino Luzzatto observes that by the fifteenth century:

Italy no longer occupied the same place in the economy of Europe as in the two preceding centuries. The old position of monopoly was gone, and the old power of expansion was enfeebled. To this extent, undoubtedly, it is proper to speak of Italian economic decline. But to use the word 'decline' in the further sense, of an absolute fall in the volume and value of production and exchange, would be wholly unjustified. . . . If production for export contracted in the woolen industry, the loss was largely balanced by compensating progress in the silk industry. . . .

Not only the manufacture of silk was stimulated by the new love for luxury, elegance, and artistic refinement. All industries were affected which produced articles for personal adornment or the embellishment of the home and public and religious buildings. Handicrafts in wood and iron, cooper, bronze, precious stones and metals, glass manufacture and ceramics, embroidery and lacemaking. . . .

For more than a century the preeminence of Renaissance Italy in the manufacture of artistic and luxury wares helped to maintain Italian foreign trade at much the same level as in the most prosperous period of the past, and may even have raised it higher.³⁰

IV.

Humanism continues to be a controversial subject of Renaissance studies and is generally regarded as one of the key

²⁹*Atti del X Congresso Internazionale* (Rome, 1955), pp. 395-96. "Peut-on considerer le XIV^e et le XV^e siècles comme l'époque de la décadence de l'économie européenne?" *Studi in onore di Armando Saporì*, pp. 551-70.

³⁰Gino Luzzatto, *An Economic History of Italy from the Fall of the Roman Empire to the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 142-3. The articles appearing in the third volume of *The Cambridge Economic History* (1963) show a notable change in tone from those published eleven years earlier. Raymond de Roover, Edward Miller, and Carlo Cipolla all emphasize the regional variations in economic conditions, but seem to agree that Italy retained its economic preeminence throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Also cf. Raymond de Roover's recent masterpiece, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

issues in the overall interpretation of the Renaissance.³¹ While the works of Giuseppe Toffanin and Giuseppe Saitta still occupy polar positions,³² the recent writings of Garin, Baron, and Kristeller grapple more realistically and modestly with the problems of the Renaissance. They also reflect many of the same characteristics already noted in contemporary political and economic studies.

Eugenio Garin is one of the most perceptive and prolific contemporary writers. He believes, with Toffanin, that there was a strong religious flavor to Renaissance humanism, but does not interpret this to mean that medieval and Renaissance thought were the same. Garin emphasizes the change of attitude which took place and shows that attitudes are as vital as facts in shaping the character of an age. In all of his latest books,³³ he emphasizes the anti-scholastic elements in Renaissance humanism and its tendency toward ideological and literary criticism. Experience and reason, says Garin, were highly esteemed by the humanists, and they expected to apply these to the problems of life as well as to the understanding of the natural world. But to a large extent their efforts met with frustration for, unlike the rugged individualism of Burckhardt's Renaissance man, Garin's humanists were racked with great anxieties and insecurity. For Garin, the Renaissance was the beginning of the modern world only in a very distressing sense.³⁴

³¹See William J. Bouwsma, *The Interpretation of Renaissance Humanism* (Washington, D. C.: Service Center for Teachers of History, 1959) on post-Burckhardtian interpretations, and also Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Studies in Renaissance Humanism during the Last Twenty Years," *Studies in the Renaissance*, IX (1962), 7-30.

³²For the period of this study see Toffanin's *L'uomo antico nel pensiero del Rinascimento* (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1957), in which he continues, as in his earlier *Storia dell'Umanesimo*, to interpret humanism not as a revival of classical paganism but as the expansion of Catholic spirituality. Also see his essay in *Il mondo antico nel Rinascimento*, Atti del V Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1958), pp. 19-38, and most recently in his *Ultimi Saggi* (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1960), esp. pp. 195-214. For the more Burckhardtian approach of Saitta see *Il pensiero italiano nell'umanesimo e nel Rinascimento* 3 vols. (Bologna: Cesare Zuffi, 1949-51; new edition, Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1961).

³³*Dal medioevo al Rinascimento* (Florence: Sansoni, 1950); *L'Umanesimo italiano: filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento* (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 1952); *Medioevo e Rinascimento: Studi e ricerche* (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 1954); and *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano* (Florence: Sansoni, 1961).

³⁴See Arturo Beccari, "Interpretazioni del Rinascimento," *Humanitas* (Rivista Mensile di Cultura), X (1955), 29-37, on Garin's work, and Nicola Abbagnano, "The Italian Renaissance Humanism," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, VII-2 (1962), 269-82.

Hans Baron, as we have already seen, stressed the civic and active elements in Florentine humanism of the early fifteenth century to show that "with comparative suddenness, a change in Humanism as well as in the arts took place which ever since has been considered to have given birth to the ripe pattern of the Renaissance."³⁵ This was the Renaissance that heralded the modern world. In a courteous yet critical rejoinder, Ferguson objected to Baron's emphasis on Florentine civic humanism as the principal factor in the birth of the Renaissance, and protested his exclusion of Petrarch, Boccaccio and the other fourteenth-century humanists.³⁶ Baron's immediate reply, published in the same journal, explained why the fourteenth century should not be included in the Renaissance proper. Petrarch, he maintained, and the other *Trecento* humanists, retreated from their initial enthusiasm for the classics and returned to an essentially medieval Augustinianism. It was not until after the beginning of the fifteenth century that the climate changed and humanism became the complete guide to civic and esthetic life. This "civic humanism," according to Baron, was the essence of the true Renaissance.³⁷

Paul Oskar Kristeller, one of the leading authorities on Renaissance thought, sees humanism much less as a guide to the active life than as a working curriculum for educational reform. His overall view of the Renaissance, closer to Ferguson's than to Baron's, is a reaffirmation of the distinctive nature and significance of the Renaissance.

I shall not repeat or refute any of the arguments proposed by others, but merely state that by "the Renaissance" I understand that period of Western European history which extends approximately from 1300 to 1600. . . . I do not pretend to assert that there was a sharp break at the beginning or end of "the Renaissance," or to deny that there was a

³⁵Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, I, vii. In a closely related study published in the same year, *Humanistic and Political Literature in Florence and Venice at the Beginning of the Quattrocento* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), Baron makes a systematic review of the sources upon which he has constructed *The Crisis*.

³⁶Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Interpretation of Italian Humanism: The Contribution of Hans Baron," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIX (1958), 14-25.

³⁷Hans Baron, "Moot Problems of Renaissance Interpretation: An Answer to Wallace K. Ferguson," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIX (1958), 26-34. For a very penetrating elaboration of this idea, along with a sketch of the decline of civic humanism in the second half of the century, see Lauro Martines' outstanding *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

good deal of continuity. I should even admit that in some respects the changes which occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth or in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were more profound than the changes of the fourteenth and fifteenth. I merely maintain that the so-called Renaissance period has a distinctive physiognomy of its own, and that the inability of historians to find a simple and satisfactory definition for it does not entitle us to doubt its existence.³⁸

Kristeller defends the assertion that "a number of important cultural developments of the Renaissance originated in Italy and spread to the rest of Europe through Italian Influence."³⁹ As for the issue of continuity vs. break between the Middle Ages and Renaissance, he declares, "We may grant that there is a continuity, but it is a continuity of change, and the differences resulting from this change tend to accumulate as time passes."⁴⁰ Kristeller also emphasizes the literary, historical, and philological nature of humanism, as contrasted with the more philosophical movements of the later fifteenth century. Thus the chief characteristics of humanism were its attention to grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy, and its reading and interpretation of the ancient Latin and Greek classics. Renaissance Platonism (as well as Aristotelianism), according to Kristeller, "had many sources, interests, and ideas that clearly set it off from humanism as a distinct movement."⁴¹

³⁸Paul O. Kristeller, *The Classics and Renaissance Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 3-4.

³⁹Kristeller, "Humanist Learning in the Italian Renaissance," *Centennial Review of Arts and Science*, IV (1960), 243-66. Cf. Ferguson's "The Revival of Classical Antiquity or the First Century of Humanism: A Reappraisal," *Report of the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting* (1957), pp. 13-20.

⁴⁰Kristeller, "Changing Views of the Intellectual History of the Renaissance since Jacob Burckhardt," in Helton, *The Renaissance*, p. 28. Cf. the useful collection of many of Kristeller's essays in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956), and the similar interpretations of B. L. Ullman in *Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955); see also Ullman's *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua: Antenore, 1963).

⁴¹Kristeller, "Changing Views," pp. 40-3, and "Renaissance Platonism," *Facets of the Renaissance*, pp. 104-05. Kristeller's colleague at Columbia University, however, John Herman Randall, Jr., sees humanism as a religious movement resisting the Aristotelian naturalism of the Middle Ages. *The Career of Philosophy, from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 49 ff. Similarly, George Clarke Sellery disparages the humanists as "Ivory tower grammarians," who "cannot have been the creative force which ushered in Modernity," *The Renaissance: Its Nature and Origins* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), p. 257. Cf. Emil Lucki's related, but more thorough and balanced judgment in *History of the Renaissance: Book III, Education, Learning, and Thought*. The most

V.

Recent interpretations of Renaissance literature and art also reveal sharpening perspectives of the Renaissance as a whole. One of the most controversial books of this period is Hiram Haydn's *The Counter-Renaissance*. Haydn divides the "Renaissance" into three distinct intellectual-artistic movements: the classical Renaissance, or humanistic revival (roughly corresponding in time to the fifteenth century), the Counter-Renaissance (the sixteenth century), and the Scientific Reformation (the seventeenth century). The classical Renaissance exalted ethical and moral teachings and held learning and reason in high regard. The sixteenth century, Haydn argues, was not a continuation of these Renaissance traits but a rejection of them. The "Counter-Renaissance," with its anti-intellectualism, anti-moralism, anti-authoritarianism "repudiated reason as the 'devil's Harlot.'" ⁴² Finally, reason and empiricism were once more united in a sort of Hegelian synthesis in the seventeenth-century "Scientific Reformation."

Although there has been much criticism of Haydn's thesis, some writers, particularly literary critics and art historians, have found his book provocative. The orderliness, precision, and optimism of Renaissance literature and art, writes Baird Whitlock, gave way after 1520 to expressions and feelings of uncertainty and unresolved tensions. "Doubts of man's capability of ordering his world threw men back upon a belief in the supernatural agency of God. This, unfortunately, not only lead to a cleansing of the church's actions and attitudes; it also brought back the evils of suspected witchcraft and the practices of the Inquisition."⁴³ In art this reversion to medieval outlooks was expressed in the Mannerist distortion of forms, in its studies of unusual light effects, and its exaggerations of both

direct attack on Kristeller's view has come from Giocchino Paparelli who boldly equates "humanism" with "Renaissance," thereby contradicting Kristeller's distinction between the literary humanist movement and the later philosophical Renaissance. Giocchino Paparelli, *Feritas humanitas divinitas, le componenti dell'umanesimo* (Messina-Firenze, 1960). See the review of Paparelli in Nicolas Perella, "Humanism and the Spirit of the Renaissance," *Italica*, XL (1963), 132-43.

⁴²Hiram Haydn, *The Counter Renaissance* (New York: Scribners, 1950), xiii.

⁴³Baird Whitlock, "The Counter-Renaissance," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XX (1958), 441. Also see Eugenio Battisti's recent and very detailed study of the same subject, *L'antirinascimento* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962). Battisti's outstanding work on sixteenth-century culture deserves much wider circulation among non-Italian readers but, unfortunately, has not yet been translated.

perspective and color in order to emphasize or suggest theological and spiritual conflict rather than depict human or natural beauty. "It seems to me to be a travesty of the meaning of cultural periods," Whitlock concludes, "to think of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation as parts of the Renaissance. Their whole mood was antagonistic to the growing humanism of the earlier period."⁴⁴

Many of the recent studies, however, have been less interested in periodization than in defining the motives of Renaissance culture. Arnold Hauser, for example, while not over-enthusiastic about the period in general, and insisting that the roots of most Renaissance characteristics lay deep in the Middle Ages, is impressed by the naturalism and realism of fifteenth-century art, especially Florentine. He also emphasizes its uniformity and depiction of cultural totality, which neither Gothic art before it nor Baroque a century later achieved.⁴⁵

Few men have been more in the center of the Renaissance controversy than the art critic and historian, Erwin Panofsky. Developing a theme which he began many years ago, Panofsky concludes, in his *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, that "there was a Renaissance which started in Italy in the first half of the fourteenth century, extended its classicizing tendencies to the visual arts in the fifteenth, and subsequently left its imprint upon all cultural activities in the rest of Europe."⁴⁶ Panofsky demonstrates that from the fourteenth century through the sixteenth, men were convinced that the period in which they lived was a "new age" sharply different

⁴⁴Whitlock, "The Counter-Renaissance," p. 449. John L. Lievsay and H. G. Koenigsberger both agree that there was a sharp difference between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but do not accept the Haydn-Whitlock suggestion that it was a decline from the former to the latter. Lievsay maintains that the late sixteenth century was more important than any earlier period in Italian literature, especially in its influence on England. *Soc. and Hist. in the Ren.*, pp. 49-56. Koenigsberger demonstrates that the apparently decadent Italian culture of the second half of the sixteenth century really represented a shift in emphasis and expression rather than a deterioration. "Decadence or Shift? Changes in the Civilization of Italy and Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Society*, 5th Ser., X (1960), 1-18.

⁴⁵Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (New York: Knopf, 1952; and Vintage Books, 1960). In this respect see also Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1952). Cf. B. L. Ullman, "Renaissance—the Word and the Underlying Concept," *Studies in Philology*, XLIX (1952), 105-18; Frederick B. Artz, *From the Renaissance to Romanticism: Trends in Style in Art, Literature and Music, 1300-1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); and Ernest DeWald, *Italian Painting 1200-1600* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961).

⁴⁶*Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1960), p. 42.

from the medieval past.⁴⁷ He admits there were numerous medieval rebirths, but his examination of each discloses them to be transitory and limited in comparison with the fifteenth-century Renaissance. "This Renaissance amounted to what the biologists would call a mutational as opposed to an evolutionary change: a change both sudden and permanent."⁴⁸

VI.

In the field of Renaissance science, the last fifteen years have marked a turning-point. In the previous two decades, those who upheld the preeminence of the Renaissance in science were all but laughed out of court by the prevailing view that "for natural science humanism was an almost unmitigated curse."⁴⁹ Although this outlook has not been reversed, it has been modified. Few scholars will now deny that the Renaissance contributed far less to scientific discovery, methodology, or thought than did the seventeenth century. But even fewer consider it a period of complete scientific stagnation. Part of the reason for this is the recognition that indirect contributions to scientific thought and development were implicit in much of the work of the humanists, philosophers, and artists of the Renaissance, and partly due to a broadened conception of what constitutes "science."

In his article, "The Role of Art in the Scientific Renaissance," for example, Giorgio de Santillana illustrates the significant part played by the Renaissance artist in advancing the study and practice of anatomy, optics, experimentation, and observation.⁵⁰ He agrees with Panofsky that art provided the

⁴⁷See Franco Simone's outstanding *Il Rinascimento francese* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1961), on the Renaissance attitude toward its time.

⁴⁸*Renaissance and Renascences*, p. 162. Panofsky further illustrated the almost autonomous nature of the Renaissance, equally separated from the Middle Ages and from the modern world, by the close association of art and science in the period, a phenomenon which from the seventeenth century on ceased to be true. "Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the 'Renaissance-Dämmerung,'" in *The Renaissance: Six Essays*, pp. 121-82.

⁴⁹J. H. Randall, *Making of the Modern Mind*, Rev. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), p. 212.

⁵⁰In Marshall Clagett (ed.), *Critical Problems in the History of Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), pp. 33-65. This view is reflected in the increased interest in Leonardo da Vinci's contributions to science. See, for example, Kenneth Clark, "Leonardo da Vinci: a Note on the Relation between His Science and His Art," *History Today*, II (1952), 301-13; George Sarton, *Six Wings: Men of Science in the Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), pp. 219-33; J. H. Randall, "The Place of Leonardo da Vinci in the Emergence of Modern Sciences," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIV (1953), 191-202; and Ivor B. Hart, *The World of Leonardo da Vinci* (Toronto: Nelson, 1961).

means for transmitting observations into ideas. In the same publication, A. R. Hall extends Santillana's conclusions to the scholars as well as the artists and craftsmen.⁵¹ Hall demonstrates that by providing new raw materials and by correlating the work of the craftsmen and the scholars, the Renaissance provided the milieu necessary for the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century.

But the most interesting transformation is the dramatically changed views of George Sarton, the celebrated Harvard historian of science. In 1929 Sarton declared: "From the scientific point of view the Renaissance was *not* a renaissance. That age of tremendous revival, . . . was a golden age of arts and letters, but to the historian of science, . . . it is on the whole disappointing."⁵² But in 1952 he announced: "In the field of science, the novelties [during the Renaissance] were gigantic, revolutionary. . . . The Renaissance scientists introduced not a 'new look' but a new being. The novelty was often so great that one could hardly speak of a Renaissance or rebirth; it was a real birth, a new beginning." "Put it this way," he concluded, "the Renaissance was a transmutation of values, a 'new deal,' a reshuffling of cards, but most of the cards were old; the scientific Renaissance was a 'new deal,' but many of the cards were new."⁵³ Among the factors responsible for the new outlook and achievements during the Renaissance, Sarton singles out the invention of movable type printing as the most important.

John Herman Randall's views seem to have changed much less than Sarton's over the last thirty-five years. He still maintains that "The movement we know as 'the Renaissance' was indeed a rejection of this scientific interest for other concerns,

⁵¹A. R. Hall, "The Scholar and the Craftsman in the Scientific Revolution," Clagett, *Critical Problems*, pp. 3-23.

⁵²George Sarton, "Science in the Renaissance," in J. W. Thompson, et al, *The Civilization of the Renaissance* (New York: Ungar, 1929), p. 75.

⁵³Sarton, "The Quest for Truth: Scientific Progress during the Renaissance," *The Renaissance: Six Essays*, p. 57. Also reprinted in Robert M. Palter (ed.), *Toward Modern Science* (New York: Noonday Press, 1961), II, 3-24. Cf. *Six Wings*, 4. Harcourt Brown maintains, in "The Renaissance and Historians of Science," *Studies in the Renaissance*, VIII (1960), 27-42, that Sarton never really changed his position on Renaissance science; he merely became more interested in the human qualities of some of the Renaissance men, like Leonardo da Vinci. "But Sarton never, to my knowledge, withdrew his fundamental view that the so-called Renaissance was an episode between two creative ages, a period of preparation for the truly great seventeenth century," p. 42.

practical, artistic, and at bottom religious."⁵⁴ With the exception of a few areas such as optics, perspective, printing, and possibly anatomy, says Randall, the concrete contributions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to scientific discovery were few. Nevertheless, during that period many of the impediments and pitfalls to the development of scientific thought were removed and the way was prepared for the "great awakening" of the seventeenth century. All of which emphasizes the scientific orientation of our time and the tendency to praise or condemn previous eras in proportion to their contribution to science.⁵⁵

Although he does believe there was "relative stagnation of the natural sciences during the fifteenth and for the first half of the sixteenth century,"⁵⁶ Robert Klein insists that many humanists of the period made positive contributions to scientific thought and practice, much of which was not actually applied until later. Men like Agricola, Cardan, Scaliger, Mercator, Alberto, and Ficino made the Renaissance a unique period in science as well as in humanities. A limited but perceptive summation of the trend in current interpretation may be seen in Marie Boas' *The Scientific Renaissance, 1450-1630*, which is intended to show that "the period from 1450 to 1630 constitutes a definite stage in the history of science."

It was an era of profound change; but the change was curiously consistent. Equally, this era marks a break with the past. I do not wish to deny the importance or validity of the mediaeval contribution to science, especially to mathematical physics; but however much sixteenth century scientists drew from the science of the fourteenth century they were sepa-

⁵⁴Randall, *The Career of Philosophy*, p. 49. In somewhat the same light, see A. R. Hall, *The Scientific Revolution, 1500-1800* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954); Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957); and Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, new ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

⁵⁵Alistair Crombie also illustrates the trend of recent historians of science to look more favorably upon the Renaissance in direct proportion to its disassociation with humanism. *Augustine to Galileo: The History of Science A.D. 400-1650* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), and *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science, 1100-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953). Paul Chauchard, *L'humanisme et la science* (Paris: Spes, 1961).

⁵⁶Robert Klein, "Les humanistes et la science," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XXIII (1961), 7. Strangely enough, Jean Pelseneer, in "La Réforme du XVI^e siècle à l'origine de la science moderne," *La Science au seizième siècle* [Colloque International de Royaumont], (Paris: Hermann, 1960), pp. 153-65, sees the origin of modern science in the *Reformation*, particularly in the socially "outward" view of Protestantism.

rated from it by three generations' passionate attempt to revive Graeco-Roman antiquity in fifteenth-century Europe. The attempt to re-discover and relearn what the Greeks had known dominated men's minds in 1450; the brilliant innovations of the sixteenth century showed that this knowledge, once assimilated, had surprising implications. The revolutionary theories and methods of the 1540's were fully realised by 1630.⁵⁷

The meaning of the literature surveyed here can best be judged by each one for himself. Yet it seems apparent that there are present some common denominators that merit emphasis. The view, for example, that the Renaissance constitutes a distinctive period in Western development appears as a recurring theme in recent Renaissance interpretation. It is repeatedly viewed as an epoch which was creative in many ways, yet decadent in others; a crucial period, if not transitional in the Ferguson sense, at least evanescent, lying between the equally distinctive civilizations of the Middle Ages and that of more modern times and having a very lasting effect upon the latter. The characteristics and features of this period look different to different people, but most agree that it was both a time of great change and of stagnation, of evolving methods and outlooks, and reaching out into the unknown while at the same time groping back into the resources of the medieval and classical past. It was the Renaissance.

⁵⁷*The Rise of Modern Science* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers; Collins, 1962), II, 13.