

Research on the Work of the Age of Renaissance

Ziqi Han^{1,a,*}

¹*School of European studies, Tian Jin Foreign Studies University, Tian Jin, 300011, China*

a. hzq46test@163.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: The main research will focus on the works of the Renaissance and the thoughts of the Humanists. In this work, we will have the discussion of the definition of the perfect society and human qualities in the age of the renaissance, and we will select some works from William Shakespeare and Dante Alighieri and try to find their expectations of the new society and their idea about what quality a man should have. Meanwhile, the research will also quote the words from other works of the age of the Renaissance, and some folktales will also be discussed to analyze the citizens' attitude towards society. At the end of the paper, Hedonism and Asceticism will also be discussed. The main tools that will be used in this research will be book manuscripts and historical and sociological analysis. This study will be mainly based on the original text of the author's book. This work will interpret my thoughts through these masterpieces, and we will have a conclusion of what is the perfect society in their eyes. They also discuss whether their ideas have any real-world implications. (Some of the ideas in the following article have not been fully demonstrated. Please ignore and forgive if there is any offense.)

Keywords: Renaissance Humanists, History, Literature, Sociology, Asceticism, Social morality

1. Introduction

This study will mainly focus on Renaissance humanists' expectations of the human nature and cause people to think about their own human nature. And will also discuss whether there is a lack of social morality in the Renaissance. The current mainstream research direction is about the emancipation of human nature during the Renaissance, and the emancipation of humanity is, of course, positive. However, if people no longer fear being judged in the afterlife, their behavior in real life will be influenced more by their own moral standards. Unfortunately, not everyone is capable of self-control and self-behavior. So, while people rejoice in humanity's emancipation, they are also tormented by their own desire. And because of this, the humanists of the Renaissance not only celebrated the greatness of human nature but also showed their own concerns about this indulgence. And of course, this is the part we are going to discuss. Finally, we will discuss the influence of people's morality on society. We will analyze the original literature and compare it with the primary source to understand the author's attitude towards this kind of phenomenon. And we will also analyze the plot in the author's article directly in combination with the history of that time; that will help us to gain a clearer picture of the society of Renaissance.

The study of humanity is a topic that will always be important to all of us. The degeneration of social morality is something that no one wants to see. Therefore, the study of humanistic morality in the Renaissance maybe can help us to find the balance between the emancipation of humanity and self-behaved, remember raise the ideological and ethical standards is the essential part to create a perfect society, that is why we are going to study this topic. Finally, that will help us to find peace in our minds. And these thoughts will also become the guidance of modern life.

2. The Analysis of the Work in the Age of Renaissance

The first part of the text will be the analysis of the work of Shakespeare. His attitude towards love, the fine qualities of humanity, and his worries about social morality and people's moral standards will be discussed.

2.1. LOVE in Shakespeare's Work

If we read the book of Shakespeare, we will find that he actually mentions love a lot of times. But love has different forms. The love between lovers will give Hermia strength to get rid of the shackles of feudal ethics and pursue her own happiness and true love, just like the word he said: "Belike for want of rain, which I could well betem from the tempest of my eyes [1]. And love seems to be a prerequisite for salvation. Maybe we can say that he thinks people should have a variety of qualities, and love is definitely one of them. And I think he does believe love is the key to opening the gate of emancipation for humanity. In his work, love can grant people wisdom and courage. For example, in his comedy "A Midsummer Night's Dream" or "The Merchant of Venice," The characters in the book find each other because they have love. But they can also turn bad luck into good luck because of the existence of love. Shakespeare's play, Love has incredible magical power, but one thing should be noted: this love we are discussing is not only the love between lovers, but also the love of the world we live in, and his book is a portrait of human life. So this also tells us to not forget love's power in real life. Love can grant people wisdom, love can dispel prejudice, love can overcome hatred. With the power of love, humans will never be slaves again.

2.2. Qualities of Human in the Book of Shakespeare

What qualities did Shakespeare think people should have? Here are some analysis based on the plot in the book. Honesty is no doubt one of the essential virtue of mankind. And how did Shakespeare describe the importance of virtue in his book. I believe he set up a very clever contrast between the pros and cons. For example, in "Othello," Iago is a treacherous villain; nearly all the words he says are lies. But Othello considers him one of the honestest people. And he always called him Honest Iago. This is a clever irony. Also, Edmund in "King Lear" is also a tragic deceiver. Their lies make the fate of the people become more miserable. This design makes people reflect: what will people and society be if there is no honesty? Shakespeare uses this to remind people of the importance of honesty.

Kindness is the key to sensing the beauty of human nature. Shakespeare didn't have to stated openly that someone is kind. But nearly all the positive characters in his book have hidden goodwill and kindness in the bottom of their hearts. Maybe they did not show them to us, but those kindnesses keep them away from evil and crime, and keep them away from degenerates. This is also a guideline for our real life; we can not live and exist without kindness. Always pursue your own value, but don't be fooled by greed. All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, who shalt be king hereafter." [2]. So said the witch, the omen of greed. This greed can drive people mad and make them lose themselves.

I do believe Shakespeare had a high expectation of humanity. That's also why he thought people should have those virtues. But he was also worried that the emancipation of humanity would also bring degenerate and indulgent behavior. He was afraid of humans' maybe no longer wanting to control themselves. He feared that people would lose their respect for virtue.

2.3. Shakespeare's Worries about Social Morality and People's Moral Standard

If we want to discuss this topic, then we must consider the social background of the Renaissance. In the age of the Renaissance, Humanists encourage people to pursue freedom and happiness in this life. Of course, this is inspiring, but it also leaves some people feeling befuddled; the loss of self-discipline and the expectation of a better life will leave people feeling befuddled. Consider some undisciplined people; the fear of judgment in the afterlife is the only thing keeping them from being a criminal, and they will misinterpret the meaning of humanity's emancipation and use it to satisfy their own desires. These people will become the cancer of the entire society and destroy the great achievements of the Renaissance. We can also find some examples in Shakespeare's book. For example, in "Macbeth", He tries to steal the crown after he heard the prophecy, and his greed and madness destroy his own country. In Hamlet, you can find madness, indulgence, and murder in this book. If without the resistance of the prince, what will it be like? And also think about the two daughters of King Lear. They use lies to seize the wealth of their father. How ironic that a swindler gets property while honesty gets banished. The lack of self-control will also happen to the people we consider who are good. Gloucester is an honest person and loyal to King Lear, but he also has his mistakes. Edmund is a bastard, and because of indulgence, Edmund was born. And he treated Edmund unfairly; he even cursed him in public. This behavior twisted Edmund's mind, and this madness finally destroy himself. The research has also proved that in Shakespeare's book, those who lost themselves will suffer from their own mistake. If people lose their sense of morality, they should be burned in the flame.

3. The Discussion of the Work of Dante Alighieri, Mainly Depends on the Analysis on Divina Comida

First, we need to analyze the role of reason and faith. We can find in <Divina Comdia> when he faced the threat of greed and Eve degenerate: O, of the other poets' honor and lights. Allow me the long study and great love that compelled me to read thy volume. You are my master and my author [3]. He will need the help of Virgil. Virgil is the embodiment of reason, and the beasts that stopped Dante are the incarnation of sins. These sins are exactly the evil of human nature that Dante saw. Those sins make him feel hopeless and will also make us feel hopeless, and what can we use as a weapon to destroy those incarnations of sin? Dante has already given us the answer—reason. Virgil helps Dante get away from the flames of hell, and reason will also help us get rid of the torment of desire, and reason will always guide us to do the right things. But is it enough for people to have only one reason? The answer from Dante is no. Virgil can only lead Dante out of Hell; he can never lead him to the gate of Heaven. Because he has no faith, without the faith of God, no one can reach the gate of Heaven. So Beatrice is the one who leads Dante to Heaven. Here is what I think: The reason is that the way that people confess themselves, love and faith are the only ways for us to find our own redemption and the only way to find the way to Heaven.

People can understand and reflect on themselves rationally. And with faith and love, the people will be inspired and finally be saved. Just as he said, like a lark in the air express. O glorious stars, O light imbued with mighty virtue, I acknowledge [4].

What can we learn from the thoughts of Dante? Which attitude will you choose to face your own life? At least we will know what Dante expected people to do. These two qualities will be

needed—rational thinking and something even more important. Love and Faith Actually, the reason why Dante chose Virgil as the representative of reason and philosophy is worth thinking about. I am sorry that we don't have enough space here to discuss this question, but we can still have a clear definition of the perfect person in Dante's perspective—rational and faithful, critical and having a heart full of love. Rational will be your weapon against evil, faith will sanctify you, and Love will be your key to Heaven's gate.

According to the analysis of the work this paper has discussed, we can have a simple view of the Renaissance humanists' attitude towards society and human nature. As we all know, most literary and artistic works are reflections of real society. Therefore, the author's description in the book should be able to find a realistic basis. So the next part of this paper will discuss the influence of people's values on people's behavior.

4. The Discussion of Eternal Soul

People's pursuit of the purity of the soul seems to be an enduring topic. Most people are always pleased to know something is eternal, and that's definitely a relief to the people who still suffer in real life. Faith and religion can help people to touch and feel the entity of the soul. No matter in which era, this pursuit of mankind will not change greatly. We will still use the symbol of the Renaissance. In the age of the Renaissance, people were seeking for changes and more opportunities to find the meaning of the word "Humanity", and also the chance to find the emancipation of the entire human race. This circumstance will not change people's expectations of the eternal soul, and they still have the hope of entering the kingdom of heaven at the bottom of their hearts. So nearly all people need to find a balance—a balance that can help people escape the labor of reality and also allow them to find peace in their conscience. This change in people's minds can facilitate the realization of an idealized society. People will have their own rights to choose what they want in real life, and in the bottom of their hearts, people will never forget what we are seeking—the kindness and the peace of our conscience. In this circumstance, all the behavior of people will never violate the baseline of morality and our conscience, and with this hope, a perfect society will be built.

5. The Conflict between Material Desires and Spiritual Desires

This kind of conflict will always exist, no matter which era you belong to. The question is, what will you choose for the way you live? And what is more important to you? Hedonism and Asceticism-- To live is to pursue spiritual tranquility and salvation of the soul.

If we read carefully, we will find out that the characters we just listed actually have something in common--that they are all pursuing something. On the surface, these people are pursuing justice, love, freedom, and something else, and this is the truth, but if we think further, we will realize they are actually pursuing the right of choice. They are trying to win the right of choice. They want to decide their own life, and that's exactly what they are fighting for. Besides the dream they have and the freedom they are pursuing, this is also the reflection of the people in that age. In fact, the characters in the book are symbols of the zeitgeists of that age.

A man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains [5]. So how should people lift the shackles of society and rely on self-discipline to achieve a perfect society? The reason why society puts shackles on people is that people do not have enough moral consciousness. And only perfect moral standards and the pursuit of truth and art can free the people.

Let's extend this topic for a bit and analyze the influence of art and music on people. This topic will still focus on the age of the Renaissance.

We can get a general understanding through the following sentence. Because art in the Renaissance was people-oriented, these arts tried to interpret love for the entire human race in different ways. Whatever literary works, paintings, or sculptures exist, they all extol humanity's greatness. People not only begin to find the beauty in life, but also start to realize the beauty of their own existence. There are different opinions on the art of the same period in history, but I would like to sum them up to one point—people start to realize the importance of their own existence. These arts arouse people's sense of independence, and people begin to realize they belong to no one but themselves and God. So people begin to examine their values. The awakening of self-consciousness will come along with the progress of human nature, and people will begin their journey of pursuing their own freedom. The beauty of art is the most indispensable part of mankind. Only the revival of art can lead to the revival of human nature. That's also why the Renaissance actually begins with the revival of art.

If we fully observe the history of art, we will find that art is actually the embodiment of people's thoughts at different stages. As a result of this theory, we can also find the spirit of the Renaissance in the arts of that age, so it's actually quite interesting to match these images. Besides, through this theory, we may have a clearer definition of what art is. Maybe art is the most essential way for people to understand the world. When people begin to touch something, they will try to express their feelings through the ways of art. Of course, this contact can be concrete or abstract. Art can perfectly describe these two different feelings. Of course, art is much more than this. That's also why art can always be the spiritual guide of mankind.

During the days of the Renaissance, people were trying to realize the emancipation of their spirit and their flesh. It is not entirely correct if we simply sum up this idea as Hedonism, but based on the theory of Epicurus, he was trying to allow people to enjoy the pleasure of their physical form as much as possible, and of course he also mentioned the importance of morality. Someone may consider Epicurus is the only one who knew how to reconcile his moral standard with what he knew about the true happiness of man. And his natural desires and demands. We will find that this idea has something in common with the freedom and happiness that were pursued by the people in the age of the Renaissance. But people must ask themselves: How long can this happiness last? Denis Diderot once said: "If morals were corrupt, taste will surely deteriorate." That's true. If there is no morality, happiness will be worthless. Although hedonism can surely grant people the pleasure of their physical form, this kind of happiness is short-lived, not eternal. And what about asceticism?

Asceticism means humans' carnal desires are low, selfish, and meaningless. It's poison to themselves and the entire society. It's the source of all evil. That's why Asceticism emphasizes the regulation of carnal desires and pleasures and even requires the abandonment of all desires, and this is the only way to find peace in people's minds. One thing is for sure, there is nothing wrong with people who try to live in peace and stay away from the desires of the world, but the balance between pleasure and self-behavior seems to be a very interesting question.

6. Conclusion

O grace abundant, by which I presumed. To fix my sight upon the Light Eternal, So that the seeing I consumed therein! I saw that in its depth far down is lying. Bound up with love together in one volume, What through the universe in leaves is scattered [6].

The answer of all the questions are moral and love. People can not live without them.

It's all a matter of a person's choice. Anyone can live their lives the way they want, but they should never impose their will on others. But the question is still how to find your own course or destiny in your own life, whether from the perspective of Shakespeare or the idea of Dante. At least we can have one conclusion. In the age of the Renaissance, even though everything is changing, the everlasting pursuit of humanity and kindness will remain forever. Besides Self-discipline is an

inevitable need for self-achievement. But if there is no love, humans will be an island, an isolated island for all eternity. Whether it's fraternity for the world or love for the one you love, that love will become the redemption in and of itself; with love, we will be saved. What people thought about themselves during the Renaissance period is still useful today. Trying to understand yourself and improving your moral standards will make you a better person. Society is always full of desires and temptations. The question is how to finally review the truth about yourself. How to balance pleasure and self-discipline. This will also be a topic worth pondering all the time. The opinion in this paper is highly subjective. The views and discussions in this article are mostly based on historical manuscripts and literary works. This article is an analysis of these famous works, so there must be subjective opinions. Beg to be excused. If anyone is offended, it is entirely coincidental; please forgive. This article leaves much to be desired. And more information will be cited. The views in this article will be more rigorously justified.

Acknowledgment

Thanks for the helping of the teachers and professors. They really done me a great service. The thoughts and guidance of the professor help me to inductive my thoughts, and my teachers also helped me with responsibility and patience, thanks again. I couldn't done it without the help of the teachers.

References

- [1] William Shakespeare, 2019, <<A Midsummer night Dream>> Yilin Translation publishing House, Nanjing, Act 1 Scene 1.
- [2] William Shakespeare, 2018, <<Macbeth>>, Yilin Translation publishing House, Nanjing, Act1 Scene 3 A barren heath. Thunder.
- [3] Dante Alighieri, 2011, << Divina Commedia>>, Ji Lin published House, Changchun, Chapter 1.
- [4] Dante Alighieri, 2011, <<Divina Commedia>>, Ji Lin published House, Changchun, Chapter 22.
- [5] Jean Jacques Rousseau, 2020, <<Du contrat social>>, Liaoning people's publishing House, Shenyang, This is the sentence quote from the original text.
- [6] Dante Alighieri, 2011, <<Divina Commedia>>, Ji Lin published House, Changchun, Chapter 33.