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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Introduction

- Amid the Search for New Authorities was an attempt to Define New Views of Man and the Universe
  - Main change was away from collective authority to Individual-individualism is a positive good.
  - One path was the claim that individual had right to immediate contact with God.
  - Another path was Renaissance Humanism.
  - Alongside grew a new attitude toward the world.
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## Question

- Think about this. Radical individualism, a trend of the modern era, holds the individual to be supreme and autonomous and, thus, posits the individual's overriding goal in life to be the gratification of self and personal success. Sound familiar?
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## Question

- Can you think of examples of the trend toward radical individualism? In moral thinking? There is no absolute right or wrong, just my perspective. In civil rights? I have a legal entitlement to my life style and redress of any infringement of that life style, regardless of how deviant it is. A bizarre example? Any living creature has the same rights humans do. Look at how intense anti-fur people can be.
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## Questions

- And yet growing alongside this trend toward radical individualism is a reliance on some authority (government, courts) to secure individual rights. Do we have a contradiction here? Using group authority to promote individual rights? Individual rights which challenge the stability of the group?
  - What is the logical end of radical individualism?
  - Should we have more emphasis on the good of the community? If so, how do we achieve it?
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## The Search for Direct Communion with God

- Johannes Eckhart, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327)
  - Sought mystical union with God. God is ultimately unknowable except in direct intuitive experience.
    - Truths are metaphors: the Kingdom of Heaven is the spiritual realm here and now.
    - This mystical experience is not leaving the body. It is a grounding for living in the here and now.
  - Eckhart's influence on Friends of God, Brethren of the Common Life, and other mystics.
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## The Search for Direct Communion with God

- Imitation of Christ grew out of Eckhart and mystical movement. Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471).
  - New Views of the World also grew up alongside new views of individual.
    - Why did scientific view not occur earlier?
      - Necessary precondition was value placed on world as good.
      - Men also needed motive to seek scientific knowledge.  
Thinkers need new non-religious view of world.
  - Motive for seeking knowledge was power over nature.
    - Even from 900-1350 innovations helped encourage view that man could gain control by experimentation.
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Toward a New World View

- New world view began with rejection of realism and adoption of extreme nominalism.
    - Nominalism supported view that universe complex and indeed infinite.
    - This conflicted with traditional religious conceptions of world.
  - William of Occam (1300-1348)
    - Asserted right to pursue knowledge without regard to spiritual implications.
    - “Occam’s razor”: only one cause is necessary if sufficient.
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## Toward a New World View

- Occam rejected Aristotelian concept of multiple causation:
    - Material cause: what was transformed?
    - Efficient cause: by what constraints?
    - Formal cause: why this form?
    - Final cause: what is the purpose?
  - Planetary motion might be caused by distant attraction and repulsion. The earth might move. Same laws govern all matter and motion. Universe might be infinite.
  - Also advocated radical social and political ideas.
  - Marsilio of Padua (1270-1342) developed ideas.
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## Toward a New World View

- Marsilio put forward idea of popular sovereignty in Defensor Pacis.
  - Occam's ideas led others in new directions.
    - Nicholas of Cusa (1400-1464). Suggested life on other planets. Finally, one comes back to unknowable mystery: transcend science by mystical union with God. But Nicholas leaves us with a mathematical universe and a God obeying mathematics.
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## Toward a New World View

- With Nicholas Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, and Galileo Galilei new view of infinite universe comes to fruition.
  - Copernicus in 1543 publishes On the Revolution of Heavenly Bodies. Earth a minor planet. Sun - centered system makes better sense.
  - Kepler's work supported his theory. Kepler's 3 laws of planetary motion.
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Toward a New World View

- Galileo's perfected telescope and confirmed Copernicus' theory. Formulated law of falling bodies. The law of falling bodies assumes that no air is present to act on the objects being dropped and says that, under the influence of gravity alone, all bodies fall with equal acceleration, regardless of size, mass, density, or horizontal velocity. He also developed the concept of Inertia.
  - Isaac Newton finished process with Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy.
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Question

- The Church wound up on the other side from Galileo and the astronomers proposing a new view of the world. Should the Church be taking a position about scientific theories? Is it really religious business?
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Renaissance Humanism as a New View of Man

- Humanism arose in Italian cities such as Florence, Milan, Venice, Naples and Rome.
  - Basic assumption: “man is a rational being possessing unlimited potential for goodness and excellence.”
  - Humanism also a cultural and literary movement.
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Question

- What do you think about the humanist view of man? Has man unlimited potential to develop?



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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Renaissance Humanism as a New View of Man

- Leading figures: Italian--Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457); Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472); Baldasar Castiglione (1478-1529); and Giovanni, Count Pico della Mirandola. Northern Europe--Desiderius Erasmus (c.1466-1536) and Thomas More (1478-1535).
  - Humanism as an attitude toward man. Mirandola's Oration on the Dignity of Man. In his life Pico embodied essence of humanist view of man.
  - Oration a defense of his offer to debate 900 propositions.
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Renaissance Humanism as a New View of Man

- A Reading from the Oration.
  - Why did Humanism first appear in Italy?
  - Many cities dominated by despots. Despotism fostered individuality of certain people in cities.
  - Even the life of republican cities fostered individualism.
  - Cosmopolitan spirit among elite.
  - Model for new individuals was “all-sided man”.
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## Renaissance Humanism as a New View of Man

- “L’uomo Universale” Leonardo da Vinci.  
Leon Battista Alberti. Latter truly universal in interests and abilities. Wrote on architecture. On Painting. First treatise on geography since ancient times. Painted first self-portrait. Wrote a work taken for a Roman comedy.
  - Alberti’s varied education. Classics. Law. Much self-acquired. Learned architecture on his own. Began reconstruction of St. Peter’s Basilica.
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# Toward New Views of Man and the Universe

## Renaissance Humanism as a New View of Man

- Many-sided men. Humanist training for businessmen.
  - Life was to be lived to the fullest.
  - The new moral ideal was desire for glory and fame.
  - Cities sought to honor famous sons.
  - Humanists knew their power to make or unmake reputations.
  - Sometimes took frightful turn. “The fame of infamous deeds.”
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## Question

- We have seen some modern examples of the search for fame through infamous deeds. Name some instances.
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