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## **UNIT 8 RENAISSANCE: HUMANISM IDEAS AND SCIENCE**

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### **8.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The present unit deals with a very vibrant period of European history that extended from around 1500 to 1800 CE. During this time there was a tremendous cultural resurgence that came to be called the Renaissance, which means ‘rebirth’. It affected all spheres of European life — social, economic, and political and ultimately brought about a very significant widening of people’s intellectual horizon. In fact, it led to the beginnings of the modern west and the modern world. After reading this unit, you should be able to understand many penetrating ideas, including:

- the socio-economic and political factors that led to the emergence of the Renaissance;
- the historiographical dimensions associated with the Renaissance;
- ideas and philosophy in the context of humanism; and
- literary, artistic, and scientific achievements of the Renaissance.

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### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The origins of the Renaissance can be located in the backdrop of socio-economic developments in Europe from the beginning of the fifteenth century till the end of the eighteenth century. This was the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism. The beginning of the Renaissance in Italy can be traced back to the period of the middle ages. It is interesting to note that during the high middle ages (eleventh to thirteenth centuries) Italy was very different from the rest of Europe. The Italian city states took the lead in the cultural renewal that led to the

Renaissance. The Renaissance did not mean only a revival of the classical tradition, which had been lost sight of during the middle ages. The Renaissance was not an isolated phenomenon. The Renaissance and its impact went much beyond revival. The developments in Italy influenced literature, philosophy, art in a way that constituted a major conceptual shift in the understanding of humanity itself.

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## 8.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU

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A number of socio-economic and political factors in conjunction with each other contributed to the Renaissance in the city-states of Italy. The territorial rivalries in Italy between the pope and the Holy Roman Empire led to the Italian city states becoming independent. Italians never enjoyed a coherent political apparatus, but were economically vibrant and dynamic as early as the thirteenth century. Though some city states had a republican form of government (communes) and some were ruled by despots (signori), the existence of an urban life was very significant throughout the country. The aim of both was the same that is to encourage commercial and mercantile activities.

The city states of Venice, Amalfi, Bari and Florence had spearheaded the commercial Revolution which resulted in the creation of a new social order based on wealth rather than birth. Feudalism could never develop strong roots in Italy. Social and marital ties between the nobility and merchant classes created an atmosphere conducive to learning, flowering of the arts, the spread of consciousness among the populace, and above all individualism. Merchants, princes, and even popes commissioned works of art. The Renaissance was urban in its art and literary forms and the society re-invented itself in accordance to the new socio-economic culture.

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## 8.3 RENAISSANCE: MEANING AND INTERPRETATION

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The term Renaissance in a simple sense means rebirth or re-awakening. A narrow perspective regards it as a movement associated with the revival of classical antiquity which means that the ancient Greek and Roman cultures were rediscovered through their works of literature, philosophy, and art. Their ideas were analyzed and interpreted. Major Greek texts were restored and translated into Latin. But the Renaissance was much more than a re-awakening. It affected all aspects of European society and culture and marked the beginning of a new age, the age of modernity.

Historians in their own way have contributed to the interpretation and re-interpretation of the term Renaissance. As suggested by Denis Hay, the notion of Renaissance was evolving throughout the long period that ranged from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The concept of the Renaissance can be traced to Giorgio Vasari's "rinascita" which was used exclusively to refer to a stage in the artistic development of Italy. (*The Lives of the most excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*).

Academicians and scholars like Johan Huizinga in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and Wallace K Ferguson in his work *The Interpretation of the Renaissance:*

*Suggestions for a Synthesis* locate the origins of Renaissance in the middle ages. However according to Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* the Renaissance was a movement that ushered in new forms and attitudes and gave the highest priority to individuality.

In pre-Renaissance society (the middle ages) two dominant institutions influenced the socio-cultural life of Europe. They were the Catholic church and the feudal system which were built on a pyramid of estates and values centring around complete subservience to the landlord and the church. A serf was bound to his landowning 'lord' and to the land he worked on; he could not dream of a different life. The Renaissance ushered in a distinctive thought process that helped to undermine many traditional ideas associated with the church and feudalism.

The notion of the Renaissance as a distinctive period or a watershed dividing the Middle Ages from the modern epoch dominated historical writing for centuries. However, it must be remembered that the Renaissance was not a separate occurrence; it should be located in the ambit of ongoing historical developments.

Renaissance, or cultural awakening, happened and not just at one time. The 'Carolingian' Renaissance of the ninth century brought about a renewal of the works of Latin while the 'twelfth-century' Renaissance was noted for revival of Greek learning and Roman law through contact with the Arabs. Therefore a re-awakening of Greek and Roman culture did not come as a sudden upsurge in Italy. Historians have emphasised the role of Italy in the Renaissance because Italy was the homeland of the ancient Roman civilization. Consequently the Renaissance in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must be seen as a culmination of, rather than a movement towards, cultural revival in Europe. Italian cities were groping their way towards a new culture distinct from the chivalric culture of the nobility and the scholastic culture of the clergy. In this sense the Renaissance went beyond the revival of classical learning. It paved the way for the idea of humanism and a new spirit became manifest in art, architecture, painting, sculpture, music, and literature.

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## 8.4 HUMANISM

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The most dominant theme of the Italian Renaissance was humanism. This was a term that was used by the 19<sup>th</sup> century historians to describe the concerns of the Renaissance thinkers who turned their attention and focused upon the dignity of man and his privileged position in this world.

This humanist movement was based on Neo-platonic philosophy which emphasised the primacy of human values over those of feudal and ecclesiastical institutions. The humanists' believed that the human mind was capable of thinking for itself without relying on divine authority and traditional institutions. In brief, humanism made man the measure of all things in society. However, this new focus on man and the world should not be seen as a loss of faith in God. It was in fact a critical reassessment of the ideas of medieval theologians. Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante were the forerunners of the Renaissance ideas which gained ground over a period of time.

Humanism was the basic source of inspiration for all the cultural changes of the Renaissance, heavily influencing art, literature, history, and political ideas.

Humanist scholars devoted themselves to *studia humanitas* which included the study of rhetoric, grammar, poetry, and ethics.

Geographically, humanism originated in Italy spreading through the peninsula from its original centre in Florence. Neo-Platonism emerged in fifteenth-century Italy. Initially it was a philosophical movement deriving its inspiration from Plato's *Republic* which was in marked contrast to the medieval form of theology and philosophy known as scholasticism.

Some of the prominent members of the neo-platonic academy were Marsilio Ficino and Picodella Mirandola. Ficino tried to find commonalities between Plato's thought and Christianity. He agreed with Plato that the soul was not subject to death and that after leaving this world, it would be united with God. He also agreed that the source of all love was God and that it connected all human beings to each other. (Roy T. Matthews and F. De Witt Platt)

Marsilio's student Picodella Mirandola in his work 'Oration on the dignity of man' propounded that man belongs in the middle of a great hierarchy of beings created by God and that he is endowed with the freedom to either degenerate to the level of a brute or ascend to higher forms. His underlying argument was that man is the moulder and maker of his own destiny.

The value system of the Renaissance as may be perceived in the concept of humanism embodies ideas like emphasis on the Neo-Platonic philosophy, regeneration of the civilized man, a more practical kind of education, a new spirit of questioning and challenging blind faith. The spirit of humanism stood for a revised approach towards religion. This does not mean that the Renaissance scholars and artists were atheists or anti-clerical. Rather they were critical of the church and churchmen who had abstract and narrow ideas divorced from the reality of the natural human love for god.

The aim of humanists was to prepare man to take his place in society. The objective was not to make man a highly trained scholar, but rather to develop correct social values and right forms of expression.

Marsilio Ficino translated many Latin works. Humanity, he wrote, had the unique faculty called intellect which he described as an "eye turned towards the intelligible light".

Humanism gave importance to the pursuit of worldly concerns and endeavours. It stood for a new way of life which accepted the existence of god, but stood for a direct connection between man and god. So the Renaissance resulted in man emancipating himself from the "omnipresence" of the medieval church and dogmas which could not be rationalised. Neo-Platonism gave a more individualistic approach to religion. It questioned the supreme authority of intermediary institutions like the church, bishops and other members of the priestly hierarchy and put forward the idea that they were unnecessary for obtaining salvation. Men could now keep their minds open and aim for the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake and to understand the world on their own terms.

So it can be suggested that the spirit of individualism was the most prominent notion of the Renaissance. Italian thinkers attacked medieval idealization of values like poverty, celibacy, and seclusion and praised instead the institution of marriage

and family life. The Renaissance is said to have liberated men from the theocentric world (theological world) to an anthropocentric world or (human world).

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## 8.5 GROWTH OF LITERATURE AND NEW LEARNING

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The growth of this new attitude encouraged a new interest in and critical approach to the study of classical literature. The publication of pamphlets, books and ancient manuscripts at this time reflects these changes. Throughout the period of the Middle Ages all scholarly and religious literature was written in Latin. This was the language of the elite and upper classes. The Renaissance created a distinct literary culture. It brought about a decisive shift making works of poetry, drama and history accessible to a wider public. Not only was Latin replaced as the medium, but there resulted a very significant growth of vernacular literature in the commonly spoken languages of the time, Tuscan, English, German, French and Spanish. The Renaissance produced a series of great men in literature like Petrarch and Boccaccio in Italy, Thomas More and William Shakespeare in England, Boscan and Gocilaso de La Vega in Spain, Rabelais in France, Erasmus in Netherlands and Ulrich Von Hutten in Germany.

Renaissance literature assumed varied literary forms in theme and style. For example, Petrarch gave a lot of importance to language, figure of speech, and poetic verses; he inspired Italian intellectual life. His work largely focussed on human activities. Dante was famous for love poems. He wrote poetry connected with worldly affairs and human emotions. Dante's work *The Divine comedy* is seen as one of the earliest writing expressing Renaissance ideas. Boccaccio was praised for his work *Decameron* (a collection of 100 stories). Most of the stories are non-religious and deal with the daily lives of common people. Such writings stimulated new thinking that gave fresh insights into the understanding of human behaviour.

However, literature as a vehicle for propagating ideas of individualism and realism reached its apogee under Colluccio Salutati, the Florentine chancellor. His ideas contributed to the notion of civic humanism. Civic humanists encouraged the idea that citizens should develop ethics and moral principles in relation to the life and activities of the community. They believed that participation in public affairs was a virtue and a duty.

Some of the other literacy figures were Ludovico Ariosto, Plantus and Terrance. They had a strong impact on literary forms like poetry, grammar, essays, and drama, which mirrored social conditions of the time. Towards the end of the high Renaissance, i.e., mid-15<sup>th</sup> century phase, the introduction of the printing press made a large amount of material available in the public domain. The universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Heidelberg emerged as centres of literary and artistic activities.

Johann Gutenberg established the first printing press in Germany in the mid-fifteenth century. Printing enabled translations of the bible, classical texts and books on subjects like law, philosophy and science. The print culture had far-reaching repercussions. Distribution and circulation of books increased in an unprecedented manner and for the first time new ideas and information reached large audiences.

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## 8.6 POLITICAL THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY

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The Renaissance humanists owe a lot to their predecessors, the Greeks for the development of philosophy. The medieval church had itself used certain classical concepts to construct an impregnable system of doctrine and political thought. Beginning with Aristotle's assumption that man is naturally a political and social animal, St. Thomas Aquinas developed a hierarchical structure of authority and the obligation involved in man's relationship towards god and the temporal ruler. Perhaps the new philosophy of Neo-Platonism was an attempt to break the edifice of scholasticism.

One of the humanists who contributed to political philosophy is Niccolo Machiavelli. His most celebrated work is *The Prince*. In this work Machiavelli sought to examine through historical references, the forms of political and military action which were likely to ensure a ruler's political survival. In his book he justifies the use of deceit and treachery as essential for the functioning of a successful government. Therefore the idea that the end justifies the means became the main inference from Machiavellian thinking. He proposed to do for politics what the painters of his time did for landscape art, i.e. to examine the scene from calibrated perspective and depict it appropriately. Through his other work *Discourses on Livy* he emphasised that the study of the classical past (the Roman Republic) could be used as a basis for making deductions about political actions. The book was an attempt to develop a new kind of political thought in response to the social-political needs of his time, but in the light of the past.

There were other philosophies that developed at this time. Stoicism and Epicureanism were two other schools of thought that began to gain ground during the Renaissance. The philosophy of Stoicism was about casting doubt on the idea of the absolute truth of received knowledge. For Stoicists no knowledge could be absolute and they envisaged possibilities of discovering new ideas even within the existing system of knowledge. In their view virtue was based on knowledge. In this people remain indifferent to pleasures and pain. Epicureanism was seen as a source of ultimate happiness.

Ultimately, the Renaissance created a new language, a new spirit and ethos. The political thinkers and scholar spread such ideas and philosophy to a wider public that created a new intellectual awakening.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What do you understand by the term Renaissance?

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- 2) Write a short note on humanism with emphasis on Renaissance literature.

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## 8.7 ART AND ART FORMS

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The Renaissance was an age of genius. The Renaissance ideas continued to develop and are a source of modernity in this modern world in which individual endeavours were recognized. It was a period of tremendous searching and critical re-examination of beliefs that had been held for centuries. This was a time when philosophers, poets, artists, and humanist scholars focused their attention on the role and destiny of man, the limitations imposed by the intractable movement of time. The deepest among them gave tremendous importance to human experience and the singularity of each human life.

It can be said that in the sphere of art and architecture the Renaissance was connected closely to changes in society i.e., the growth of materialism, trade, the rise of the bourgeoisie. These developments resulted in the development of an art which was more worldly. This point has been summed up beautifully by J.H. Plumb who wrote, “Art reflects society, its aspirations, confusions and inheritance”.

Most of the works of art that were commissioned by the nobility and the merchants focussed on the potential of man rather than the power and mystery of divinity. Till today the Renaissance art and architecture survives in its original form. Along with the revival of classical ideas, the growth of the Renaissance art from the Gothic to the Baroque style developed in four phases with their unique characteristics.

The first phase was the early Renaissance phase which saw the revival of the Gothic and Romanesque styles. It was an art which centred around religious activities and had a functional objective. Some of the essential features of this style included rounded arches, massive walls, small windows, plain and dark churches in order to present a spirit of austerity and the idea of the other world. In this form classical ideas were entangled with tradition as reflected in the statues of the Madonna and the paintings of saints.

But gradually after the fifteenth century, art assumes new forms in the high Renaissance period. Art not only emerges for the sake of art but men of genius lifted art to its summit: Leonarda da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian. All works of art depict maturity not only from an aesthetic perspective, but because of the importance being attached to man. The Renaissance artists looked upon art as an imitation of life, which required close observation of nature and human anatomy. Artists used optics and geometry and used their learning to develop a scientific perspective. Harmony, perfection, and love for beauty were the key features of Renaissance art. Art was no longer exclusively seen for its religious significance.

Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his ‘Treatise on painting’ that a good painter had two principal things to paint i.e. man and the intentions of man’s mind. He reminds us through his works that all objects have their natural dimension like the peasant cutting crops or sheep grazing on the mountain.

Some of the famous works of this period were Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*, *The Last Supper* and *Monalisa*; the *Pieta*, i.e., virgin Mary grieving over the body of dead Christ and the frescoes of Michaelangelo titled Buonarroti on the ceiling of the *Sistine Chapel*, particularly *The Last Judgement* integrated classical ideas and personal experience. If one looks at *The Last Supper* in its historical context, its pre-eminence as a religious and human drama is clear beyond doubt. This painting captures the emotions of fear, sorrow, and grief which appear on the faces of Christ's disciples at the announcement of the betrayal by one of them. Vinci's *Monalisa* attempts to portray the personality of an individual through the depiction of smile, yet this is a face that forever hold the eye. *Monalisa* was the wife of a Florentine merchant, *The Sistine Chapel* demonstrates the scope and power of Angelo's genius. To give a perspective to the multi-faceted themes, he divided the ceiling into 3 zones. In the lowest zone he painted biblical ancestors of Christ inwith heroic episodes. The 2<sup>nd</sup> zone comprised of old Testament prophets. In the third zone he painted episodes from the book of Genesis. In these frescoe's, Angelo gave expression to the Neo-platonic notion popular in the Renaissance – life is a journey towards liberation and union with god. It suggests philosophical enquiries into the meanings of light and the universe.

The other artists who worked in the same period were Titian who was renowned for the use of vibrating colours and Raphael is associated with the idealisation of feminine beauty.

The Venetian style is beautifully exemplified in Titian's *The Entombment* that illustrated the feeling of colour and motion. Raphael's *La Bella Jardinière* reflects important advances in the trend of realism. *The School of Athens* is a fresco by Raphael that sums up classical knowledge by depicting two great men Aristotle and Plato debating with each other to show that the Renaissance was associated the revival of classical works.

One cannot miss out on Sandro Botticelli's *Three Graces* which displays strength and vitality. To this ancient theme he added the elegance, sophistication, and grace of his own age. The fact that human figures were painted with perfection can be seen in *The Tribute Money* by Masaccio which is heavy, substantial and real. This added to the beauty of the painting by defining more closely the relationship between body and clothing.

During the high Renaissance phase sculpture emerged as a new form of art. Several portrait busts and equestrian statues of contemporary rulers were made which emphasised on the value of individualism. Michelangelo was associated with the glorification of the male human body. For instance we can make mention of the portrait bust of Piero de Medici and Lorenzo de Medici which give evidence of the feeling of self-confidence among the Renaissance men. The statue of a boy with the dolphin made by Andrea delVerocchio was remarkable in its use of motion. Michaelangelo's work *David* is the sculpture of a nude youth that stands at Piazza della Signoria under the belly of a Roman lion. This made him one of the most sought after artists in Italy.

The high Renaissance period gave way to the Mannerist phase which is identified as distorted, anti-classical, and reflective of the agony and violence of that period. This form of art emerges as a natural outcome of the socio-economic and political crisis in Italy. The deterioration in art is visible in the painting *Madonna of the Long Neck* which lacks perfection, symmetry, and harmony.



Another widely admired phase was the Baroque style of art. The Baroque artists used every device for magnifying the works of art because emphasis was on grandeur and excessive ornamentation. St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome is baroque in its exterior.

Each work of art during the Renaissance became a technical change, an adventure in perspective, proportion, and a revolution in the use of colours. The Renaissance artists were trained as apprentices under their masters. For the first time a space was created for the artist who was recognised as an individual in society and strove to perfect their craft. They put their signatures on individual works, wrote reminiscences and memoirs.

Although the innumerable paintings of the crucifixion and the Pieta speak eloquently of a deep rooted faith, but we need to remind the readers that in the high Renaissance phase scenes from the bible and Christian legends were being relocated in the lives of ordinary men and women and placed on earth. All works of art were tied with human emotion, passions and sufferings. These magnificent works of art were an admixture of classical ideas and the new values fostered by the Renaissance.

During the Renaissance period a large number of churches and cathedrals were constructed. All such grand buildings were commissioned by the popes and patronised by leading influential families. The features of the early Renaissance style are reflected in St. Andreas Cathedral. It's Roman arch columns, dome and pediment illustrate clearly the classical revival that was so basic to the Renaissance spirit. Other classical buildings were the *sacristy* of San Lorenzo, which was a Parish Church commissioned by the Medici family, and the *Pazzi Chapel*.

The most outstanding work of architecture by Fillippo Brunelleschi is the cathedral at Florence. This architecture has sometimes been called paper architecture and to some degree it does preserve in stone the procedures of laying down the architectural designs on paper and he was admired for his engineering skill. He also adopted classical styles of columns and pediments.

The Renaissance was visually one of the richest cultural movements. The Renaissance was culturally dynamic that reproduced knowledge of classical forms, symmetry, and artistic creativity. The city states were competitive and had a strong sense of making their cities vibrant and dynamic by commissioning works of art and architecture.

Most of the architects and painters like Brunelleschi, Leonordada Vinci and Massacio considered mathematical precision and geometrical knowledge integral for attaining perfection and accurate representations. A scientific consciousness was also visible in the detailed studies of the human body carried out by artists and depicted in their works. The outcome was that Renaissance artists and craftsmen created a conducive climate for the scientific revolution.

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## 8.8 SCIENCE

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Significant cross connections between science and the Renaissance cannot be denied. Studies in astronomy led to the development of extremely important ideas about the nature of the physical universe. Such ideas were taken to be attacks on the existing scholastic and theological system of thought about the cosmos.

The medieval theologians had viewed the celestial bodies only within the framework of their rigid conception of the universe.

Ptolemy had propounded the geo-centric theory of the universe according to which the earth was the centre of the universe. That was the Ptolemaic system. Such an understanding of the universe came from biblical texts and theological reasoning which was considered the source of ultimate truth. But by the fifteenth century scientific curiosity was growing and a Polish astronomer uttered the shocking truth that the earth and the planets move around the sun and not the other way around. He was none other than Nicholas Copernicus. He developed the heliocentric theory, which described the earth as a sphere that revolved around the sun in the course of a year and around its own axis every twenty four hours. Owing to the widely believed Ptolemaic view, this idea remained unacceptable for a long time. Finally Copernicus prepared his work on the *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* which was strongly condemned by church authorities.

This work was studied by Galileo Galilei who was responsible for the subsequent development of astronomy. He was largely influenced by the Platonic ideas and challenged the Aristotelian system of the universe. Galileo was able to project a new picture of the universe, particularly because he viewed the heavens through the greatest discovery of his age – the telescope. His study highlighted the satellites of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn and established the fact that the earth was like any other planet, thus giving a whole new perspective on the solar system. These ideas were not tolerated by the church. His famous work in Italian *Dialogue in the two chief world systems* made him popular, but the church put him on trial for heresy.

The scientific revolution was an important aspect of humanism as it led to the rise of Empiricism. According to this method knowledge was to be acquired through observation, experimentation, and collation of data for the purpose of the formulation of general laws.

As discussed by Stuart Andrews that the leading pioneer of this method was Francis Bacon. He laid the intellectual foundations of the Inductive method. Bacon had come to believe that knowledge that was of practical use to people, it could be described as ‘true knowledge’. He discussed and explained his ideas in two of his most influential works, *The Advancement of Learning* published in 1605 and revised in 1625 and *The New Atlantis*. He was an important source of inspiration for the founders of the Royal Society, established in 1660.

Another great philosopher of the time, Rene Descartes, argued that one of the most important tools for studying the natural sciences was mathematics. His method for arriving at logical conclusions was called Deductive reasoning. His contention was

- 1) That whatever we can think about, conceive of in our minds, exists and is true.
- 2) Since we can think and conceive of God, we must take it that God exists.
- 3) On the question of whether we should rely on our senses, he said that God would not play false with us, would not lead us astray.

According to Descartes there were two types of reality. One was the ‘thinking substance’, the mind. The other was ‘extended substance’, which meant anything outside the mind and which could be measured. This idea is described as ‘Cartesian Dualism’.

Later on modern science was institutionalised by efforts of William Harvey noted for the circulation of blood, Robert Boyle known for his laws on temperature and Robert Hooke as a famous biologist. Many historians like Herbert Butterfield have stated the data that the {production of the scientific and medical books was relatively large. According to Kleb’s bibliography (1930) there were more than 3000 editions of 1044 titles by several authors printed before 1500 that came from the Italian Press and the spirit of science and Renaissance was closest.

**Check Your Progress**

- 1) Mention the features of Renaissance painting in about 250 words

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- 2) Describe briefly the achievements in science during the Renaissance period.

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**8.9 LET US SUM UP**

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This unit covers one of the most important periods in the history of the Western world, the Renaissance, which means ‘rebirth’ or ‘re-awakening’. The Renaissance was not the name of any single event. Rather it was a series of developments and new ideas that ultimately led to the age of modernity. Between the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> CE a powerful new energy and creativity were unleashed in Europe, in the arts, literature, philosophy, astronomy, the natural sciences, in other words, in learning of all sorts. In intellectual terms there was a decisive break from the blinkered world-view imposed on society by the medieval church.

Thinkers and creative persons of various types began to re-examine the classical cultures of Greece and Rome. Equally importantly, they began to study what came to be known as Humanism, in which the critical themes were the human being, ‘man’, his place and importance in the universe, as well as the significance of the individual. This focus was the harbinger of a new way of life which accepted the existence of god, but promoted the idea that there was a direct connection

between man and God. It also encouraged the spirit of inquiry, and acceptance of the legitimacy of worldly concerns and human endeavour. In geographical terms, Humanism originated in Florence, Italy.

In socio-economic terms, it was a time when feudalism was ending and an early form of capitalism was taking its place. Changes were most marked in Italy, where feudalism had not developed very deep roots and where commerce flourished in its various independent city-states. Then, gradually, wealth became more important than birth and family for deciding a person's status in society. Leisure and spare money also resulted in the commissioning of works of arts, including architecture. Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo were two of the most famous and inspired artists of the period. Discussions and debates in the universities were dynamic.

During the Renaissance there was a growing interest in the natural sciences and tools for studying the natural world. The telescope was invented in Holland and then a natural scientist, philosopher, and mathematician in Italy, named Galileo Galelei, made one for himself. He studied the heavens through it for years. Ultimately he proved Copernicus's heliocentric theory of the universe. The powerful leaders of the church did not take it lying down. They put him on trial for heresy, which meant challenging the accepted doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

This example of Galileo's work helps us to understand that the scientific revolution was an important aspect of Humanism as it led to the rise of Empiricism. According to this method, knowledge was not to be simply received from those in authority; it was to be acquired through observation, experimentation, and collation of data and then to lead to the formulation of general laws. It is no wonder that Galileo has been described as the 'father of the scientific method'. The significance of the Renaissance is still being studied and debated today. The term 'Renaissance' itself was invented by 19<sup>th</sup> - century historians.

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## 8.10 KEYWORDS

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**Platonic ideas:** The ideas of ancient Greek philosopher Plato (428 BC-348 BC).An innovator of the dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy.

**Baroque Period:** A style of architecture,music and dance,painting and sculpture that flourished in Europe from 1600 A.D. onwards.It followed Renaissance art and Mannerism.

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## 8.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 8.3
- 2) See Section 8.4

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 8.7
- 2) See Section 8.8

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## 8.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

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