

## Candidate 1 evidence

“How Important was the Role of Classical Antiquity to the Development of Renaissance Humanism in the Fifteenth Century?”

Advanced Higher History

The Renaissance in Italy in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries



### Introduction

The Italian Renaissance was a time of extreme change; artistically there was a birth of realism not present in the Middle Ages, economically there was a lot more focus on money – unlike family name and blood, as before – and politically, leaders were subject to intense scrutiny; this was partially due to the desire to echo the Roman Republic. At the heart of this was the notable cultural shift, particularly due to the revival of classical antiquities by the humanists. The ‘father of the Renaissance’ Jacob Burckhardt describes this period in Europe, especially Italy, as an emergence from the “common veil” of the Middle Ages, into an environment of intelligence, achievement and ability<sup>1</sup>. During this time, one of the most significant events was the rediscovery of manuscripts and texts from Ancient Greece and Rome; the driving force behind the establishment of a humanist curriculum for education. Whilst the circulation of classical antiquity was one of the main factors that led to the development of humanism, the opinion that this was the only factor is one that is strongly debated. As such, the most effective way to look at this issue is in terms of the academic, political and philosophical influence of the Ancient texts; these areas will make up the chapters of this dissertation. Following an evaluation of these three factors, it will become apparent that classical antiquity was important to the development of all humanist applications, to a reasonably large extent. Despite this, the degree to which each factor – academia, politics and philosophy – was progressed by this classical uncovering, varies.

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<sup>1</sup> Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*. 1<sup>st</sup> January 1860. Page 80.

**“To what extent did the classical antiquities encourage academic development in the Renaissance?”**

One of the defining characteristics of the Italian Renaissance was the humanist movement; particularly the renewed scholarly interest in the revived classical texts. Initially an academic movement, it went on to blossom throughout the Renaissance, and by the end of the 16th century almost all aspects of life in Italy had been influenced by humanism. The academic applications of the classical writings ranged far and wide in the Renaissance, with scholars such as Manuel Chrysoloras and Guarino da Verona using their knowledge of Greek texts to synthesise a university curriculum. However, the extent to which the rebirth of the classical antiquities influenced academic development is subject to much debate, with some historians arguing that it was not rooted in academia and others, such as Robert Hole, saying that “the Renaissance’s revival of antiquity was about books and the study of the classical languages and texts”<sup>2</sup>.

To understand how far scholarly humanism was influenced by the classical antiquities, we must look first at the early humanists themselves, and see how much of their work was committed to reviving the antiquities for their own, educational interest. Three of the first notable humanists in the Renaissance period were Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati and Poggio Bracciolini. These men were dedicated scholars and spent much of their time trying to acquire original texts and manuscripts from the classical period. The most important of the aforementioned would be Petrarch - the

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<sup>2</sup> Hole, Robert. *Renaissance Italy*. Hodder Education. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1998.

'Father of Humanism' - and his contribution to the Renaissance was paramount. His obsession with the authors and poets of the Classical era sparked the resurrection of antiquity amongst the scholars who succeeded him. Indeed, such was his love for Cicero that he even wrote him letters, in his death, to discuss philosophical ideals, amongst other things. Similarly, Alison Brown argues that Petrarch altered the public perception of ancient texts; he changed them from being subject to suspicion to being admired, and thus this served to increase the circulation of the texts<sup>3</sup>.

Amongst the humanists, one of the more significant aims was to acquire uncorrupted manuscripts from classical writers. The drive behind such an avocation was to gain the most complete understanding of what the writers had originally said. Early humanist Niccolo Niccoli made the comment "*until the ancient sources flow clear again, all efforts must be directed...to recovering...the genuine readings of the ancient works*"<sup>4</sup> showing how much the humanists wanted to find these authentic pieces.

Although the main target of the humanists was to uncover the least corrupted versions of the texts, there were several other notable reasons why recovering them proved useful. One reason would be that reviving these works allowed the humanists to advance themselves academically, through philology and textual editing. They would publish new editions of manuscripts, retranslating them into proper Latin and purging them of any errors. Similarly, they would often add annotations to give their own commentary on what was being said in the text. Lorenzo Valla was particularly skilled at identifying where texts had been altered - a skill known as textual criticism - thus allowing him to return them to their genuine state. His knowledge of both Latin

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, Alison. *The Renaissance: Second Edition*. Routledge. 12<sup>th</sup> May 1999. Pages 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> Baron, Hans. *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*. Princeton University Press. 1<sup>st</sup> March 1966. Page 48.

and Greek - a rarity amongst most scholars - allowed him to translate several Greek works into Latin, which made them accessible to more people. Furthermore, his knowledge led to the significant exposure of the forgery of the *Donation of Constantine*. This document, initially thought to be a 4th Century original, effectively put the power of the Pope above that of a King. However, using his reasoning and the vernacular style of the document, he showed that some words could not have been used until the 8th century, thus proving the illegitimacy of the document<sup>5</sup>. Another humanist who was committed to uncovering Classical manuscripts was Poggio Bracciolini, “foremost among scholars... as a rediscoverer of lost, forgotten, or neglected Classical Latin manuscripts”<sup>6</sup>. In Hole’s opinion, “none travelled further or showed more enthusiasm than Poggio Bracciolini”<sup>7</sup> emphasising how much some individuals were willing to search for the texts. A rival of Valla, at least in his writings, Bracciolini worked as a manuscript copyist, unearthing - and translating - several significant texts, including his discovery of Quintilian, in the monastery of St Gall, Switzerland<sup>8</sup>. On this discovery, Poggio made the comment “amid a tremendous quantity of books which it would take too long to describe, we found Quintilian still safe and sound, though filthy with mould and dust”<sup>9</sup>. This again brings to light how devoted the humanists were to the academic bearing of the classical antiquities.

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<sup>5</sup> “Lorenzo Valla Proves that the Donation of Constantine is a Forgery”. History of Information. [cited 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016].

<http://www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=2172>.

<sup>6</sup> “Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini: Italian Scholar”. Encyclopaedia Britannica. [cited 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016]. <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Gian-Francesco-Poggio-Bracciolini>.

<sup>7</sup> Hole, Robert. *Renaissance Italy*. Hodder Education. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1998. Page 70.

<sup>8</sup> “Poggio Bracciolini on his discovery of the lost manuscript of Quintilian”. [cited 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016]. <http://www2.idehist.uu.se/distans/ilmh/Ren/hum-poggio-quintilian.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

Another way in which the humanists of the Renaissance sought academic use from classical antiquity was in their emulation of the ideas and styles in their own works, particularly their historical writings; the worship of these texts permeated all humanist work. Cicero and Livy were particular favourites amongst humanists - especially Petrarch, who wrote letters to both figures and remarked in his letter to Livy "I should wish (if it were permitted from on high) either that I had been born in thine age or thou in ours..."<sup>10</sup>. This emphasises the desire of the humanists to draw upon as much of the classical knowledge as possible.

It was not just in their writing that the humanists tried to mimic the ancients, but also in their rhetoric and dialectic. Historian Peter Mack makes the remark "...reading both Cicero and Virgil would...enrich one's understanding of how to use both words and arguments"<sup>11</sup>. The scholars of the Renaissance often used the viewpoints of classical figures as arguments, and classical antiquity influenced how they spoke and presented themselves. Circulation of newly recovered manuscripts, such as Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and Cicero's *De oratore*, helped the humanists learn rhetoric from a classical perspective. On the other hand, "there were no significant textual discoveries in dialectic"<sup>12</sup>, which meant that the teaching of this was merged with that of rhetoric; a feature that differs between the Renaissance approach and the Medieval approach. We can see, therefore, that the humanists of the Renaissance utilised classical texts to inspire their own work and speech, highlighting the academic side of the movement.

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<sup>10</sup> "Petrarch: Letter to Livy". Heritage Hawks. [cited 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015]. <http://www.heritagehawks.org/faculty/dbrown/APEH/ch13Renaissance/PrimarySources/Petrarch,LettertoLivy.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Mack, Peter. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*. Cambridge University Press. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Page 82.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

The final academic use of the antiquities by the Renaissance humanists was the educational programme that arose as a result of classical influence. Not only did the interpretation of the texts by the scholars lead to a new educational outlook, but also teaching methods were changed as a result of the antiquity revival. Initially, there was a redefinition of the curriculum and how people were taught, with the main *studia humanitatis* putting emphasis on Latin, rhetoric and philosophy amongst other things - subjects that were of great significance to the humanist. There also existed a much smaller section of education, which focussed primarily on mathematics, for those who wanted to go into business.

Scholars such as Manuel Chrysoloras and later Guarino Da Verona used their knowledge of Greek to create a programme of learning. Hole describes Da Verona's contribution, saying that "...he and his pupils played a crucial role in establishing Greek as well as Latin as an important medium of scholarship"<sup>13</sup>.

In conclusion, it is evident that the revival of the classical antiquities encouraged academic development in the Renaissance to quite a large extent. Clearly, the humanist movement began with a purely academic focus, but flowered into more than that, whilst still retaining the desire to learn. Some, such as Kristeller, believe that the Renaissance humanists' academic contribution was merely a combination of "the novel interest in classical studies imported from France toward the end of the 13th Century and the much earlier traditions of medieval Italian rhetoric"<sup>14</sup>, but others disagree; Garin suggests "it was the expression of an entirely changed human

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<sup>13</sup> Hole, Robert. *Renaissance Italy*. Hodder Education. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Bloom, Harold. *The Italian Renaissance*. Chelsea House Publishers. 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004. Page 128.

attitude"<sup>15</sup>. Whichever way it is looked at - academic or not - the mood of Renaissance humanism is best summed up by John Hale, who said "unless the word 'humanism' retains the smell of a scholar's lamp, it will be misled"<sup>16</sup>. The suggestion here is that Renaissance humanism was very academically focussed, but as this chapter shows, this was extensively due to the classical texts which the humanists laid hands on. Not only did the scholars themselves benefit, but a whole curriculum arose as a result of the works of classical writers.

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<sup>15</sup> Humanism class handout.

<sup>16</sup> Hale, John from Hole, Robert. *Renaissance Italy*. Hodder Education. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1998. Page 80.

**“How important was classical antiquity in the development of civic humanism?”**

Whilst it can be argued, to a large degree, that Renaissance humanism started off as a purely academic pursuit, it is difficult to maintain that it remained this way throughout the duration of the period. Indeed, as time progressed, an increasing number of humanists were becoming involved in politics; both in advisory positions and as active politicians themselves, such as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni; both Chancellors of Florence and prominent humanists. This marked shift in the main role of humanism can be explained as being resultant of the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the classical antiquities. In particular, much of the politics of the Renaissance was quite heavily based on the model of Rome, which was seen by the humanists as the ideal civic situation, whether they operated in a Republican or princely context; it was considered a pure and honourable Republic. James Hankins summarises the humanist impact on politics when he says “though the humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries produced no great work of political philosophy, they did change fundamentally the intellectual world within which political thought would henceforward have to live”<sup>17</sup>. This suggests that, despite the fact not all humanists were actively involved in politics, their very presence and the essence of the movement did, in fact, allow a new political environment to flourish.

One of the driving forces behind this newfound political agenda, according to Hans Baron, was the conflict in 1402 between Florence and the despotic state of Milan, under the control of Visconti. He looked to unify Northern Italy, but faced strong

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<sup>17</sup> Hankins, James. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*. Cambridge University Press. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Page 118.

challenge from Bologna and Florence, and a premature death meant his empire fragmented, allowing Florence to remain independent. This threat of tyrannical rule to the Florentine people caused the humanists to re-evaluate the benefits of republican rule. Naturally, they turned to the ancients, from whom they frequently drew inspiration. One classicist who the humanists referenced during this time of political strife was Cicero, whose “political activity in defense of Republican ideals and civic spirit were acclaimed by humanists and used as models”<sup>18</sup>. As a result, political discourse became the main way in which writers, especially humanists, would express themselves and their ideals. Baron has the view that the aforementioned event caused a complete shift in the direction of humanism, as he maintains that there was no root of political ideology in the academic ‘stage’ of humanism. Despite Baron’s claim that civic humanism was the product of threat from a despotic Milan, many historians dispute this view, suggesting other reasons for civic humanism.

John Najemy sees the reason for the humanist’s newfound political interest as defence against the “popular, guild republicanism that had periodically surfaced to challenge the hegemony of the elite in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries”<sup>19</sup>. Najemy believes that these elite families, formerly in power, sought humanist guidance to re-establish control. He goes on to make the point that civic humanism was traditional in its “affirmation of a natural leadership of patrician fathers over their citizen/children”<sup>20</sup>, suggesting that the political motives of humanists were to

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<sup>18</sup> “Civic Humanism”. Oneonta. [cited 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015].

<https://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth213/civichumanism.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Najemy, John. *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*. Cambridge University Press. 12<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Pages 81-2 and 103-4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

establish this conventional view of government, but use classical political methods to make sure these ruling elites acted in a moral way.

Whilst there is some dispute over the catalyst that properly sparked humanist political activity, there is little argument over the fact that much of the humanists political ideology was rooted very heavily in the classical texts from Roman and Greek philosophers, in particular. Humanists like Coluccio Salutati studied the ancient texts in the hope of learning how to act in the present. This was particularly true for politics, as much of the writings of Cicero, amongst other classical authors, was based heavily on politics and political philosophy. Indeed James Hankins makes the argument that “the roots of humanist social criticism are generally to be found in their worship of classical antiquity...”<sup>21</sup>, a view consistent amongst many other historians as well. Furthermore, there are countless examples of classical republicanism permeating Renaissance political thought, notably from humanists such as Leonardo Bruni and Alamanno Rinuccini. Hankins goes on to say, on Bruni, that his “core political convictions were about the value of virtue and eloquence, and about the value of classical antiquity as providing models of virtue and eloquence”<sup>22</sup> showing further that classical antiquity had a strong influence on how humanists thought in the Renaissance. Indeed, an example of Rinuccini’s work strongly rooted in classical thought is in his dialogue ‘*On Liberty*’. In this work, he “sees liberty as the core value of the Florentine people, and as the animating principle behind Florence’s rise to

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<sup>21</sup> Hankins, James. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*. Cambridge University Press. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Page 125.

<sup>22</sup> Hankins, James. *The Renaissance: Italy and Abroad*. Routledge. 5<sup>th</sup> December 2002. Page 81.

greatness”, and he “[draws] on the same cluster of classical authors to do so...”<sup>23</sup> highlighting this classical stimulus behind much of the political discourses of the period. Equally, one of the most prominent figures of the Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli, used his education in classical scholarship to produce his famous work, ‘*Discourses on the Ten Books of Titus Livy*’. In it, he draws on the ideas of Cicero and “[defends] the view that the popular elements within the community form the best safeguard of civic liberty as well as the most reliable source of decision making about the public good”<sup>24</sup>. Machiavelli argues in this work that the people - the general citizens of Florence - were necessary in the upholding of republican virtues and avoiding political corruption.

It is clear, therefore, that Renaissance humanism took a very notable political turn, although it is argued that “humanists began to take part seriously in political life only in the late fourteenth century”<sup>25</sup> suggesting that there was a catalyst, prompting this marked change into active politics by humanists. Despite the fact that there is confusion over whether the cause for the use of humanism as a political tool was the 1402 conflict between Milan and Florence or a deeper rooted conflict between the elite families, the guildsmen and the people - or another factor altogether - there is no arguing about the fact that classical antiquity developed the use of humanism as a political tool. The heavy influence of the philosophers and politicians of ancient Rome and Greece permeated far into the discourses and works of humanists during

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<sup>23</sup> King, Margaret L. *Renaissance Humanism: An Anthology of Sources*. Hackett Publishing Company. 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Page 86.

<sup>24</sup> “Renaissance Italian Republicanism”. Jrank. [cited 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015]. <a href="http://science.jrank.org/pages/11130/Republicanism-Republic-Renaissance-Italian-Republicanism.html">Republicanism - Republic - Renaissance Italian Republicanism</a>.

<sup>25</sup> Hankins, James. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*. Cambridge University Press. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Page 119.

the Renaissance. James Hankins really emphasises this classical influence, when he says “‘Civic humanism’ is not Florentine, but Roman. It is a style of thought inherited from ancient Rome through Sallust, Livy, Virgil, and above all Cicero”<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Hankins, James. “James Hankins on civic humanism”. Idehist. [cited 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015]. <http://www2.idehist.uu.se/distans/ilmh/Ren/medb-hankins.htm>.

**“To what extent did the literature of Ancient Greece and Rome influence Renaissance philosophy?”**

Alongside scholastic and civic applications, humanists during the Renaissance played a central role in the philosophy of Neo-Platonism; indeed this was one of the most classically influenced aspects of humanism, rooted in the ideas of Plato. This way philosophy re-evaluated the place of man in the universe, putting him in the centre, with the ability to better himself towards God or revert to a bestial form. The Neo-Platonists also believed man had the free will, and an immortal soul, so could choose to ascend or descend to heaven or the animal kingdom, respectively. According to historian Richard Hooker, “Platonism never really faded out of the Western tradition nor was the Italian Renaissance a rediscovery of Plato; rather, the Italian Renaissance forged new philosophies from Plato and the Platonic tradition in antiquity and the Middle Ages”<sup>27</sup>, the suggestion being that there was a strong classical influence on humanists when forming this philosophy, but equally that they used the ideas of ancient philosophers to synthesise their own lines of thought; as early humanist Petrarch saw it, making honey from nectar<sup>28</sup>.

In assessing how far classical antiquity influenced the Renaissance philosophy of Neo-Platonism, it must be remembered that it is primarily based on the work of Plato, and therefore it will primarily be his literature that influenced the philosophy,

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<sup>27</sup> Hooker, Richard. “Renaissance Neo-Platonism”. Hermetic. [cited 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016]. <http://hermetic.com/texts/neoplatonism.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Navarrete, Ignacio Enrique. *Orphans of Petrarch: Poetry and Theory in the Spanish Renaissance*. University of California Press. 26<sup>th</sup> August 1994. Page 10.

however humanists did attempt to reconcile this train of thought with Aristotle and other classical philosophers, as well as Christianity.

Initially, it is worth establishing what Plato's beliefs were, as this was the foundation upon which Renaissance humanists built. As Plato saw it, the universe had 2 realms; of appearance, and of abstract form. The world of appearances was the real world, and its constant changing nature meant absolute knowledge was impossible. The humanists adapted this basic concept during the Renaissance period. They placed man in between these two realms, but due to his immortal soul and free will, he had the ability to perfect himself (particularly through mathematics) or to follow instinct and sink to the level of beasts.

There was a strong desire by the neoplatonic humanists to reconcile Platonic beliefs and Christian beliefs, particularly by humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, as the majority of Neo-Platonists were also Christian. The argument was that all religions and philosophies contained some aspects of a 'divine truth'; therefore their reconciliation would create one overarching process of thought. It is clear that the Neo-Platonists of the Renaissance took Plato's ideas about the universe as a basis for their own thought, and established this new philosophy that placed man, not God, at the centre of everything.

The two most significant pioneers of Renaissance philosophy were the humanists Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola; their contributions almost solely founded the renewed adaptation of Plato's ideas. Similarly, it was their interaction with classical antiquity that allowed them to compose Renaissance neoplatonic

thought. One of Ficino's most important offerings was his translation of all of Plato's known works from Greek to Latin. The consequence of this was that Platonic work became far more widely available - as Latin was the more commonly known language - so scholars across Italy were able to interpret the ideas proposed by Plato. Although hard to quantify, this is probably one of the defining factors that allowed philosophy during the Renaissance to blossom; making Plato's classical works more readable allowed this line of thought to develop.

Similarly, there was the founding of the Platonic Academy by Cosimo de Medici, a gathering of Florentine intellectuals who discussed Plato's works; this led to further advancement in the developing philosophy. Based on Plato's own Academy - a philosophical institution - the Platonic Academy had a wide membership of scholars and reached its peak under Lorenzo de Medici, due in part to his own interest in Plato. During their time in the Academy, Ficino and della Mirandola wrote significant neoplatonic texts, both of which strongly influenced humanist peers at the time. Ficino's 'Platonic Theology' primarily defends the immortality of the soul and "many of his assumptions are generally embedded in earlier philosophical traditions"<sup>29</sup> such as those of Plato; he draws strongly on Platonic ideas and lays out the starting point for many of the neoplatonic themes that later developed. On the other hand, della Mirandola's work '*Oration on the Dignity of Man*' looks to justify the search for knowledge, using Platonic and neoplatonic ideas as a framework. In the text, he also defends his 900 theses on religion and philosophy, thirteen of which were later condemned by the Church as heretical. Pico looked more so at the free will side of Neo-Platonism, and so his and Ficino's ideas came together to form the founding

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<sup>29</sup> "Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499)". Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. [cited 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016]. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ficino/>.

thought of Renaissance philosophy. Clearly both of these humanists produced very significant work and synthesised their own ideas. It was, to a large extent, the rediscovery of antiquities that occurred throughout the Renaissance that led to this forming of neoplatonic philosophy.

Despite this, there are other factors which some historians credit as being the driving force behind Renaissance philosophy, other than the ancient texts. According to the Epic World History website, it “was due both to the waning religious values of the time and to the aristocratic shift of emphasis under members of the Medici family from worldly affairs to a life of contemplation”<sup>30</sup> that led to the development of Neo-Platonism. Of these factors, the more significant is probably the Medici influence, as it would appear that there were still strong religious roots at the time (for example, Ficino was also an ordained priest). In fact a letter from Coluccio Salutati mentions the fact that the “contemplative life is better, more divine and sublime”, suggesting that a reflective existence was more desirable than an active life in politics, amongst other things. This is the same view that was shared by the Medici, and the very nature of pursuing this sort of lifestyle led to philosophical discovery.

Overall, there are several potential explanations for the development of Neo-Platonism, but the primary reason was the revival of classical antiquity, and the ensuing translation by Ficino from Greek to Latin. This made the texts, particularly of Plato, more accessible, and thus scholars of the Renaissance were able to interpret what classical philosophers were saying and adapt that to a Renaissance setting; the philosophy of Neo-Platonism surfaced, with its main ideals based in Plato’s thinking.

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<sup>30</sup> “Florentine Neoplatonism”. Epic World History. [cited 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016]. <http://epicworldhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/florentine-neoplatonism.html>.

Therefore, it can be said that it was the rediscovery of Plato - and to an extent Aristotle - that meant Renaissance philosophy advanced. Coupled with the idea of the contemplative lifestyle, Plato's texts inspired a generation of philosophers and therefore it is to a large extent that ancient works influenced Renaissance philosophy.

### Conclusion

To conclude, classical antiquity led to the development of Renaissance humanism in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to a substantial degree. The revival of these ancient manuscripts had an impact on all walks of humanism, but this often extended into other areas of Renaissance livelihood.

Academically, the rediscovery of manuscripts and texts from ancient Greece and Rome proved invaluable, with every learned scholar at the time wanting to find the most uncorrupted texts available. This generated a whole new branch of scholarly activity known as philology. Similarly, the contemporary humanists often drew inspiration from the writers and poets and used this style as basis for much of their own work. In particular, Cicero and Livy were widely emulated by Renaissance humanists, alongside a stimulus drawn from their ideas. In this regard, it is obvious that classical antiquity had quite a profound impact on the development of academic humanism.

Similarly, there was the application of ancient texts to a Renaissance political setting, with prominent individuals such as Leonardo Bruni and Coluccio Salutati looking to the Roman Republican model for inspiration. Politicians often used humanist revival of the classical past as justification for their own political decisions.

Finally, there was the obvious influence of Plato specifically on Renaissance philosophy. Humanists at the time tried to reconcile several different branches of

philosophy with the Christian dogma of the Church, due to a complete re-evaluation of the position of man in the universe, by the Florentine Neo-Platonists. The translation of Plato's work from Greek to Latin made it much more accessible to scholars, and thus this branch of philosophy was born.

Overall, there is a very clear impact of classical antiquity on all stems of humanism. The degree to which each was influenced varies, but it would appear that, academically, there was a strong root in ancient texts for humanism. This is the area in which there is the greatest classical basis, and it was to quite a significant extent to which all walks of humanism were affected by the revival of ancient manuscripts and texts.

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