



# Western Civilization: Triumph of Humanism and Rationalism

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K-212

# Western Civilization Dominates the Globe!

## History of Western Civ:

- Western Civilization refers to the culture that evolved in Western Europe
- Western Civilization is directly descended from the River Valley Civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt
- Western Civilization is based culturally on the achievements of the Classical Civilizations of Greece and Rome, which were rediscovered and reintroduced during the Renaissance, the event that marks the beginning of the Modern World

## Western Global Dominance

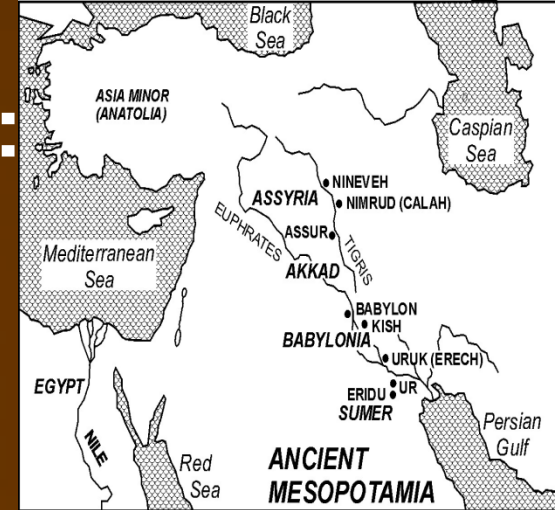
- Today Western Culture dominates the world
- The global economy was set up by the Western powers and operates according to Western principles
- Western ideas regarding democracy, human rights, rule of law and individual liberty have taken over the world.
- Western Civilization is more competitive than any other in the world and has emerged as the world's dominant civilization!



# Origins of Western Civilization:

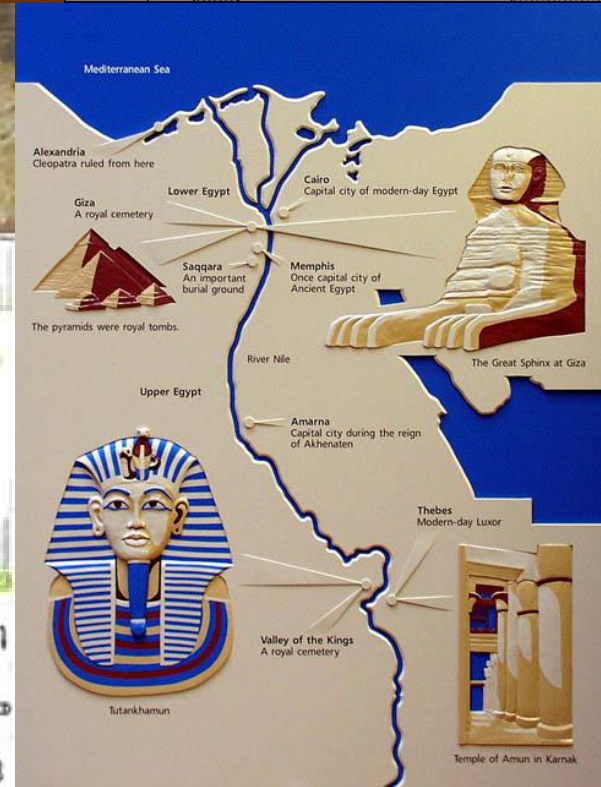
## (1) River Valley Civilizations

### Template of Civilization



The River Valley Civilizations provided the Basic Template of Civilization:

- Agriculture (few provide for many)
- Cities (civilization means life in cities)
- Job Specialization
- Writing (needed for record keeping)
- Government (to organize & regulate)
- Religion
- Social Classes
- Public Works
- Art and Architecture
- Six Social Institutions (Family, Religion, Government, Education, Social Order, Economics)





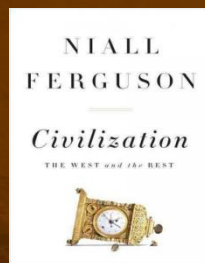




# How Did Western Civilization Come to Dominate the World?

## The Six Killer Apps!

- Niall Ferguson, Ph.D, a Harvard History professor, studied Western Civilization and published a book, “Civilization, the West and the Rest” to explain his findings.
- Q: How did the West, with a small population and resource poor land dominate the world?
- A: Six Killer Apps, cultural advantages that provided the competitive edge to the West!
- ***Western Civilization is more competitive than any other!***



## What are the “Killer Apps?”

*What set the West apart from the rest of the world? These six functional complexes, or "killer applications" led the West's rise to global dominance. Will they keep the West on top?*

- **COMPETITION**

*European decentralization fostered the growth of political and economic competition, birthing the nation-state and the rise of capitalism.*

- **SCIENCE**

*While eastern Muslim powers slowed scientific progress in their own region, the Christian West advanced militarily and academically.*

- **PROPERTY**

*Widespread land ownership and its ties to the democratic process gave the United States a more productive, stable footing than its neighbors to the south.*

- **MODERN MEDICINE**

*Developed and shared throughout colonial outposts in Africa and elsewhere, Western medicine has the power to double life expectancy.*

- **CONSUMERISM**

*The 20th century witnessed a new model of civilization centered around consumption, as American goods and fashion carried the message of Western freedom.*

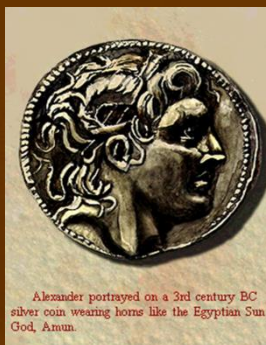
- **WORK ETHIC**

*Protestantism in America stressed hard work, saving, and literacy. Yet today while Americans save less and fewer Europeans attend church, there are around 40 million or more Protestants in China.*



# (2) The Classical Civilization of Greece and Rome: The Ascendancy of Human Greece and the Polis (City-State)

- Ancient Athens was the cradle of Western Civilization
- Greek (Hellenic) Achievements:
  - Democracy (rule by many)
    - Pericles-archon of Athens, greatest Democratic leader
  - Intellectualism- inquiry, question based learning (Socratic Method), rationalism, humanism, individualism and philosophy:
    - Socrates-Father of Western Intellectual Tradition
    - Plato-philosopher, Aristotle-founder of logic
  - Art and Literature-expressing humanism (man is the most important)
    - Homer—poet and author of The Iliad and the Odyssey
    - Herodotus-Father of History, author of History of the Persian Wars
    - Thucydides-author of the Peloponnesian War



Alexander portrayed on a 3rd century BC silver coin wearing horns like the Egyptian Sun God, Amun.



Drama- Tragedy and Comedy—dramatic expression!

\*\*Alexander the Great Spread Hellenism throughout the known world (Middle East, Central Asia, Egypt and Southern Europe by 331 BCE.



# Competition

## **Greek City-States**

- Greek City-States were independent and antagonistic towards each other
- Fierce competition characterized the relationship between the city-states
- Competition propelled the Greeks towards excellence!



# Hellenistic Civilization: Cosmopolitan Civilization of the Mind

- Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) was the greatest military commander in history and created the largest empire ever seen

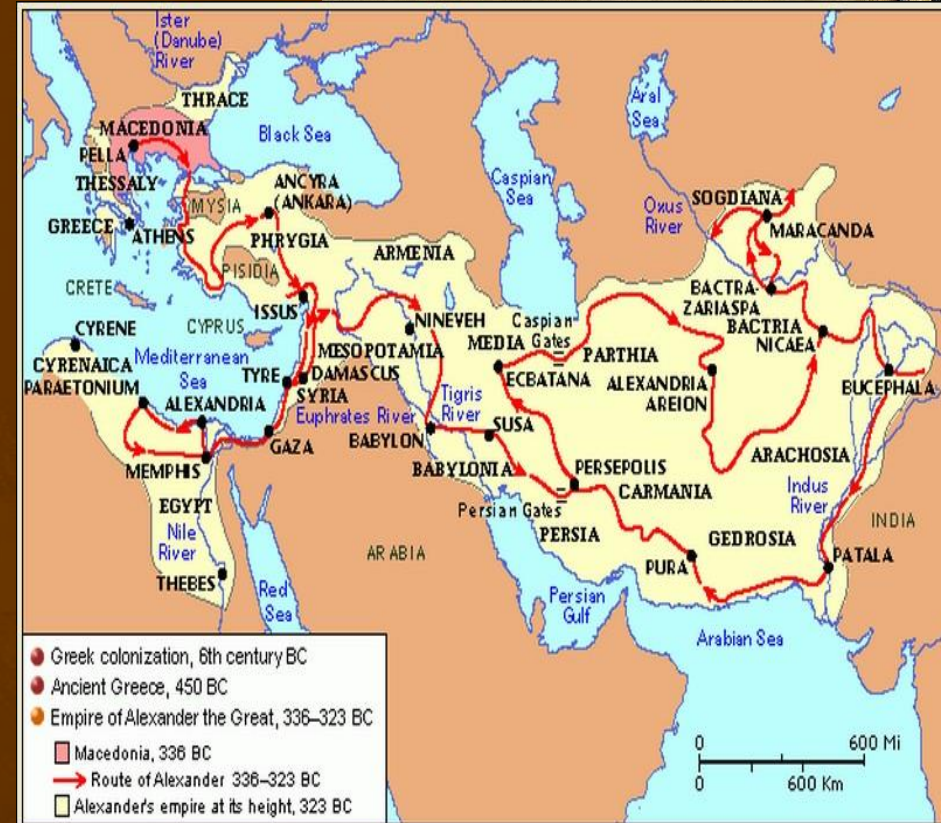


- Alexander defeated the Persian King Darius III in 3 battles and forcibly merged Greek and Persian cultures together into a new cosmopolitan (“of the world”) culture.

- Alexander spread the ideas of the Greeks to Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Egypt and southern Europe, ensuring that these ideas would dominate!

- Culture now was firmly rooted in the mind, in intellectualism.

- Civilization is transportable!





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# Rome: From Republic to Empire

## The Roman Republic

- Founded in 509 BCE by Remus & Romulus along the Tiber River on the Italian peninsula.
- Roman Republic
  - 2 consuls (executive)
  - Senate (legislative)
  - Patricians (governing class)
  - Plebians (poor working class)
- Law of the Twelve Tables
  - Code of law; everyone was equal under the law and enjoyed the same protections
- Downfall of the Republic
  - Corruption & Division
  - Assassination of Julius Caesar
  - Takeover by Triumvirates!

## The Roman Empire

- Begun by Caesar Augustus, first emperor, expanded through dynasties
- Unified all of Western Europe under Roman control, established common culture!
- Establishment of Roman cities, architecture, engineering (aqueducts), civil order over Europe, Pax Romana (Roman Peace)
- **Accomplishments:** (1) Created and maintained a large standing army made up of recruits from throughout the empire.
- (2) Conquered new territories, from Spain in the west to the land bordering the Black Sea in the east, as well as north to the Rhine River and Germany.
- (3) Provincial Administration was regularized and corruption was eliminated. Governors were selected by the Senate and quaestors were appointed to audit the finances to keep the governors honest.
- (4) Civil Service- Augustus created a first class civil service bureaucracy that kept Rome operating well despite the uneven quality of the emperors that followed him.



# Roman Cultural Contributions

## The Roman City

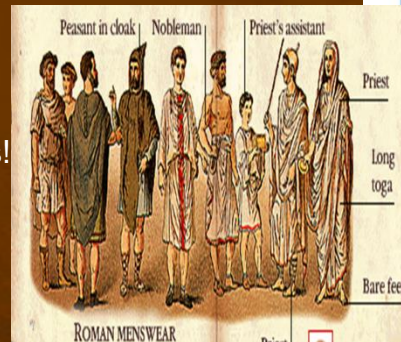
- Cities were walled, fortified
- Aqueducts brought fresh water into the city
- Sewage systems removed waste water
- Plebians got water from public fountains
- Loud, dusty, crowded; most people lived in insulae; apartment buildings.
- Streets were paved, had sidewalks, crossing stones and speed bumps

## Roman Roads

- Romans built 50,000 miles of paved roads
- Appian Way connected all of Italy (N to S)
- Many Roman roads are still in use today
- Enabled trade & commerce to move efficiently; created wealth & unified Empire
- Allowed efficient movement of armies to defend the empire
- Roman roads tied together all Roman lands and peoples!

## Roman Entertainment

- Amphitheatre-- gladiator bouts; executions, mock battles, wild animals, religious rituals, blood sports--Colosseum was most famous structure.
- Hippodrome--chariot races, horse races
- Theater--plays, modeled after Greek drama
- Board games, Ball Games, athletic contests!



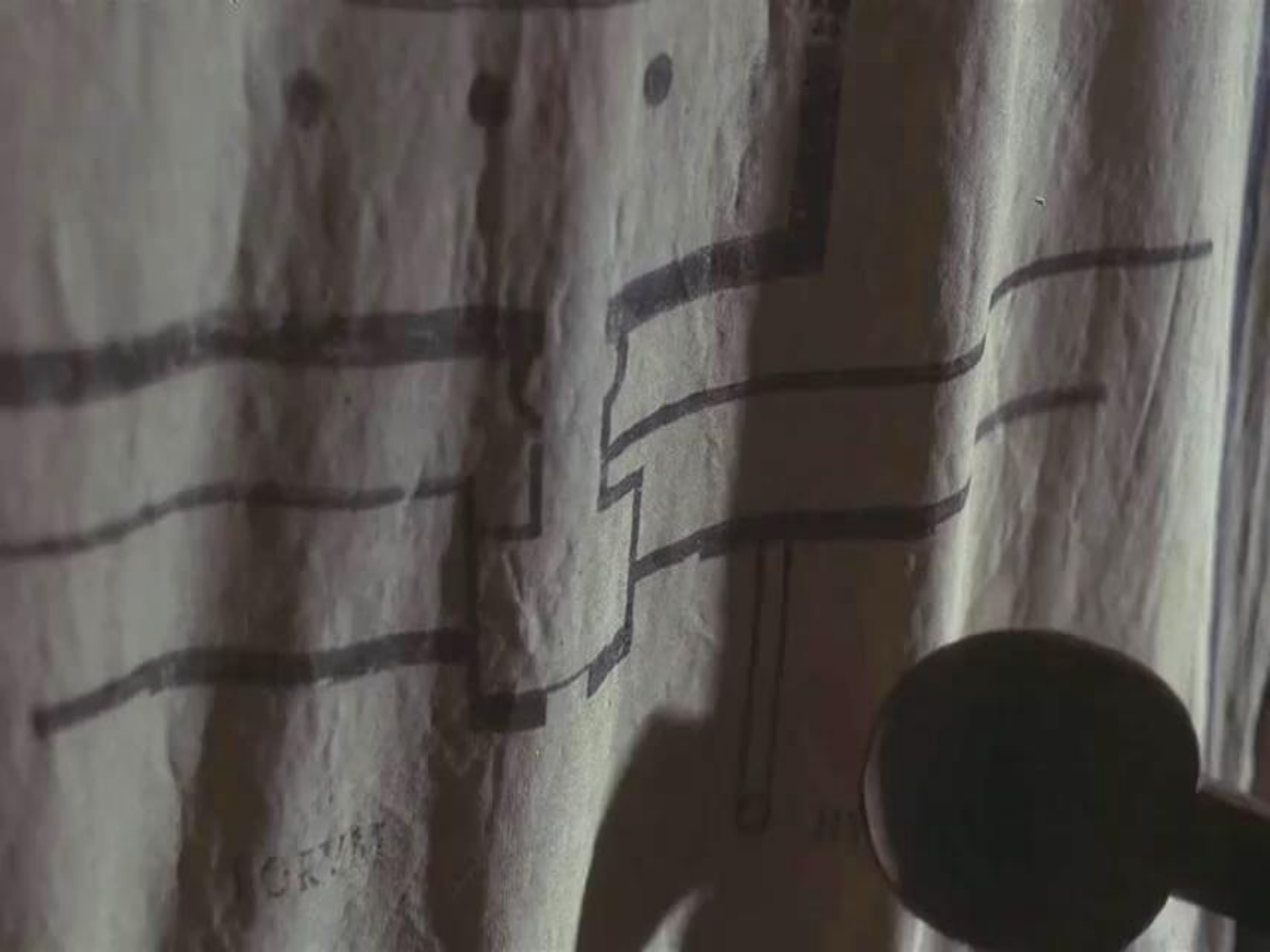
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# Roman Inventions and Innovations

- Paned glass
- Paved Roads
- Concrete
- Scizzors
- Magnifying glass
- Postal system
- Public lavatories
- Apartment blocks
- Censors
- Julian calendar
- Aqueducts
- Republican Government
- Citizenship
- Roman Numerals





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# Fall of the Roman Empire



## Rise of Christianity

- Message of Christianity and Christian values transformed the Roman character; the martial spirit of Rome was replaced by the passive spirit of Christianity
- Rome became the capital of the new religion. The conquest of Christianity over pagan Rome was complete!
- The strengths that allowed Rome to conquer the known world dissipated in the gentle message of Christianity. The Empire fell in the next century after a long decline.

## The Western Roman Empire falls to waves of barbarian invaders:

- Vandals, Visigoths, Ostrogoths

Rome fell in 476 AD when the last Western Roman Emperor was deposed by Alaric, the Ostrogoth barbarian who crowned himself emperor, ending Roman rule.

Eastern Empire lived on for another 1,000 years as the **Byzantine Empire:**

- *preserving Roman law, custom and culture*
- *fending off Islamic invaders beginning in 7th century.*
- *Preserving Roman culture throughout the Dark Ages and the Medieval Period until rediscovered and relearned during the Renaissance*

## Eduard Gibbon “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” (1776)— best explanation for the fall!

**Thesis: Decline and Fall was inevitable due to success of the empire---  
too big, rich and expensive to maintain!**

***Empires by definition do not last; seeds of destruction are in the system—all empires eventually fall!***



⚠ THIS MACHINE KILLS FASCISTS



# (3) The Renaissance: Back to the Future

## \*\*\*The Return of Classicism to Europe!\*\*\*

### Renaissance=Economics

- The Renaissance was primarily a 15<sup>th</sup> century economic boom in Italy that led to a rapid rise in prosperity and an enlargement of cultural expression (art, literature, architecture) that defined the age.
- Renaissance means “reawakening” or “rebirth” and represents the re-discovery and re-introduction of Classical Humanism to Europe
- The Renaissance is the beginning of the Modern World, with modern financial, political and diplomatic systems regulating life.
- The Renaissance began in Northern Europe a Century later!



Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

# Why in Italy at this Time?



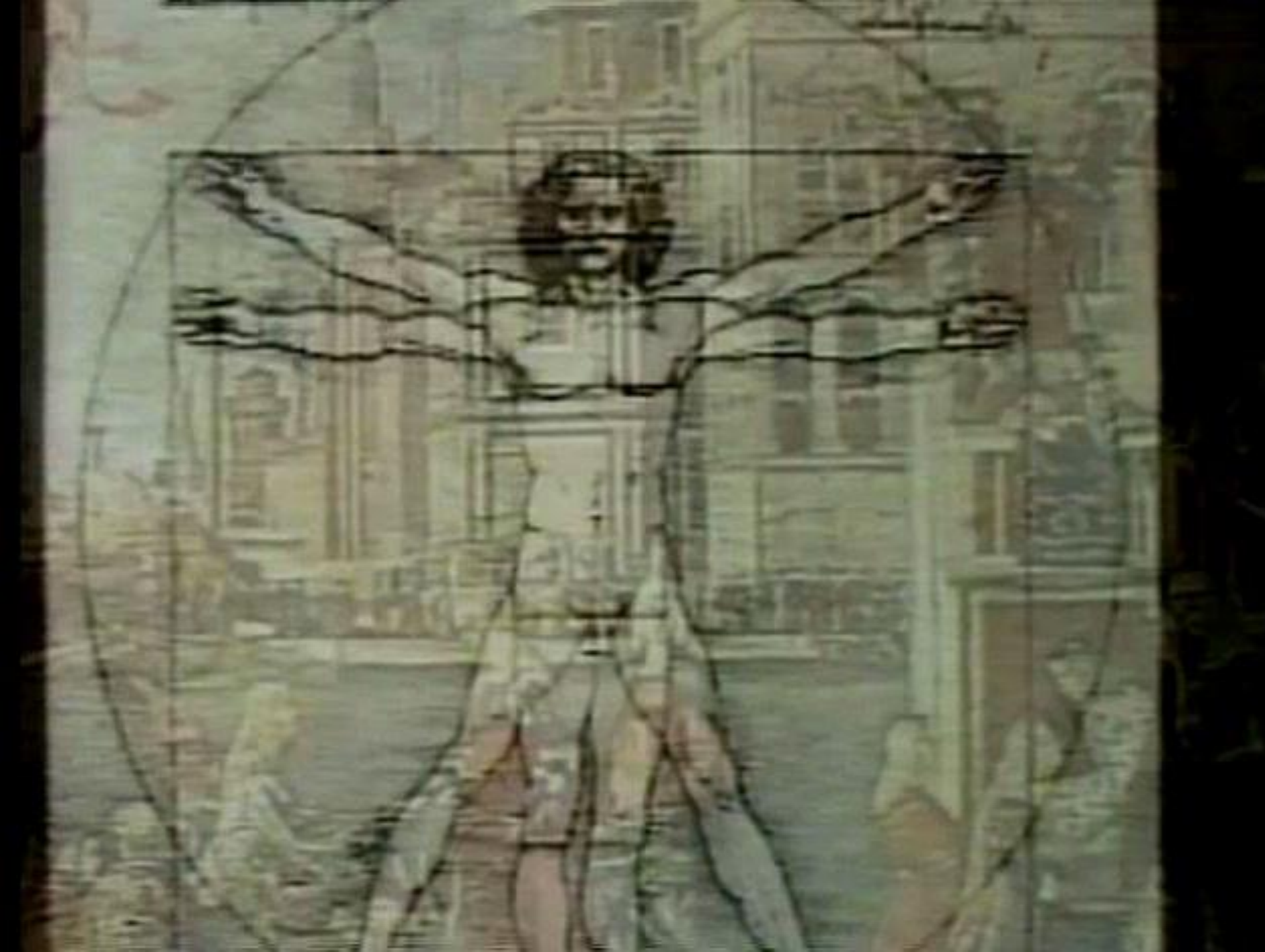
- **Revival of Commerce and Town Building** was more intense in Italy
- **Feudalism** had less of a grip on Italy
- **Presence of antiquity** was stronger in Italy than elsewhere in Europe; reminders of classical greatness!
- **Location**; perfect for trade!
- **Competition** between city-states spurred advancement! Competition was the engine of the Renaissance!
- **Capitalism**: economic system that thrived on competition for profits, great wealth developed and was spent on art, literature, scholarly pursuits and scientific inquiries.
- **Venice** was richest; trade with Middle East and the Black Sea region
- **Florence** was known for art; also the home of the Medici family of bankers!



# Renaissance Economics



- Profit-making became more important than Church doctrine; prohibitions against usury (money lending) were ignored in the quest for profits! Money always wins out over religious principle.
- Economy--trade and commerce, banking, moneylending, all spurred tremendous growth and increasing wages
- To overcome guilt, profit-makers indulge in philanthropy; they paid for art and literature:
  - Patronage of the arts=Culture!
- Influence of guilds declined as individual initiative won out in the race for wealth
- High profits led to economic diversification and rapid economic transformation into a modern system.





# Renaissance Economics; Why Patronage and What was the Role of Capitalism?



- Reason for Patronage: Art became the way to advertise economic success!
- Intensified commercial competition created the need to be efficient, which led to innovation and concentration of capital where it could be used most productively!
- Capitalism= engine of the Renaissance
  - Goal--to make the highest possible profit
  - Focus--to better the individual
  - Result--rich merchant class, powerful bankers, financial tools, usury, accumulation of money in capital pools; bankers become new power brokers!

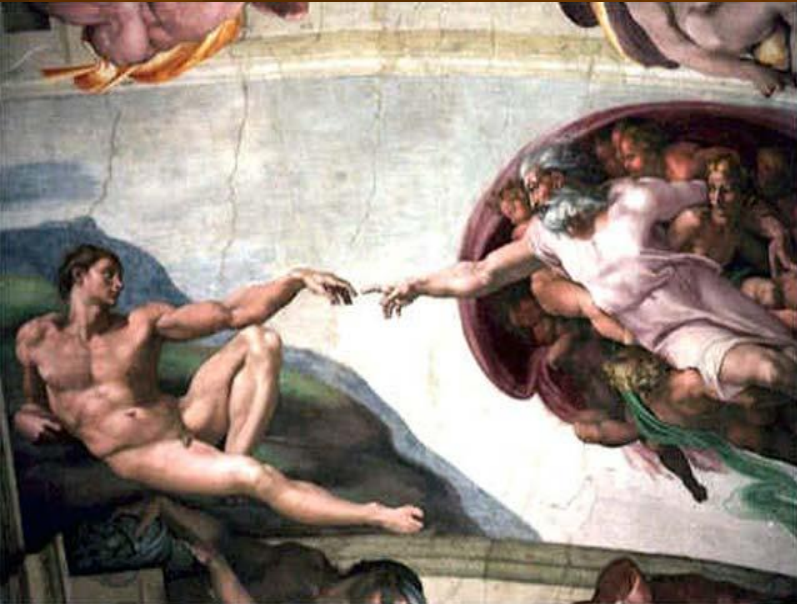
# Capitalism & The Bankers

- Bankers started as traders: began to lend surplus money in return for interest: usury!
- Mechanism of Trade--purchase goods in one town and sell in another: middleman status only!
- Banking concentrated in families; major clients are kings, princes, nobles, large commercial accounts
- Medici was the most famous of the banking families; Lorenzo the Magnificent the most famous of them all!
- Bankers were the real power brokers of the Renaissance, they ruled the Italian city-states and they set the course of the Renaissance and paid for the cultural achievements!

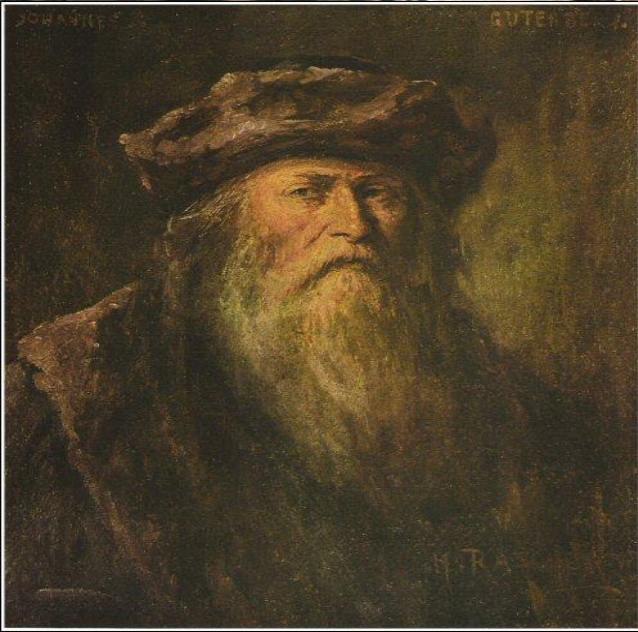




# Renaissance Society Portrayed in the Culture



- Number of portraits painted during this era illustrates focus on the individual and the dignity of man
- Growing humanism and secularism in a Christian context will lead to increase in desire for knowledge
- Rational Inquiry dominated the intellectual climate
- Focus on man's free will and power of the individual
- Rewards for living a moral, upright existence came in this life, not after death. This leads to a weakening of Church authority and the establishment of secularism in public life.

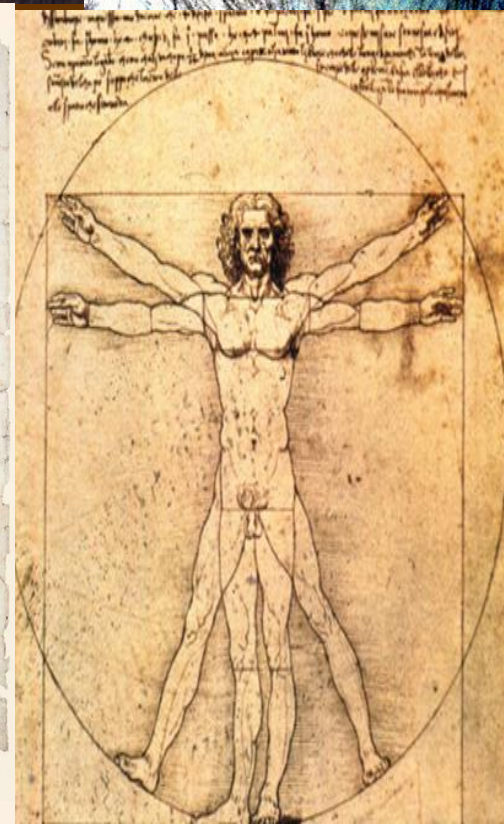
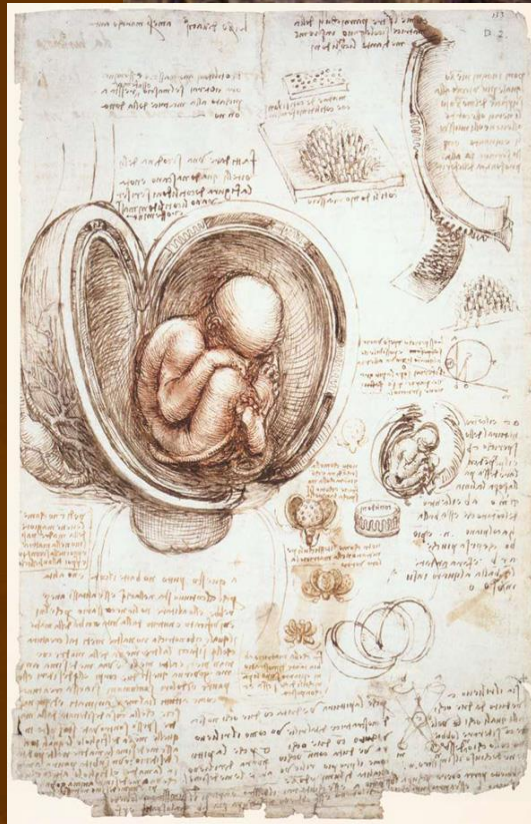
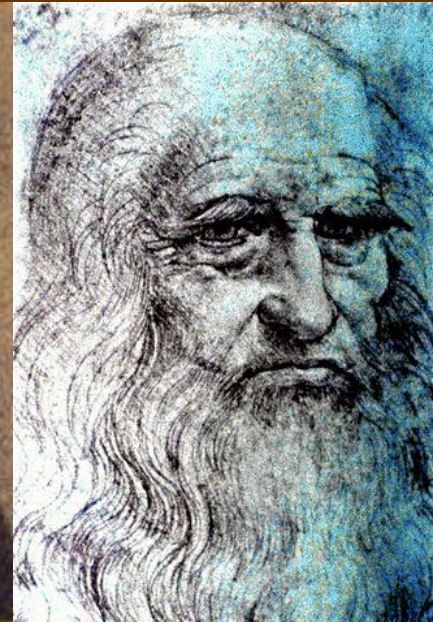




# Renaissance Man

## Leonardo da Vinci

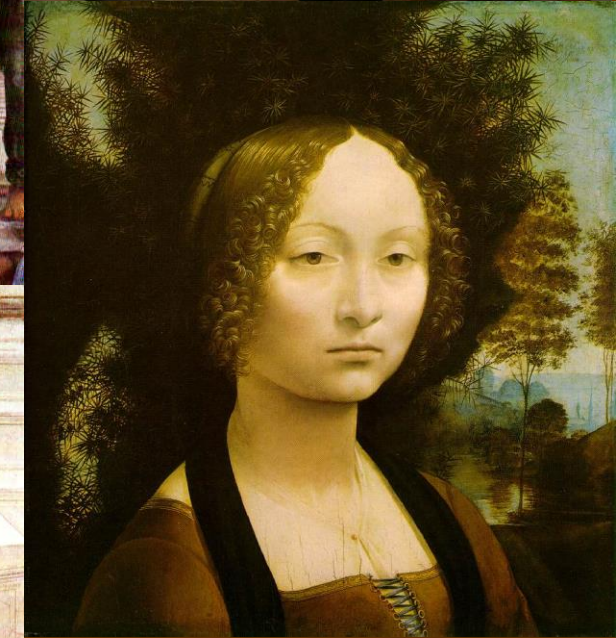
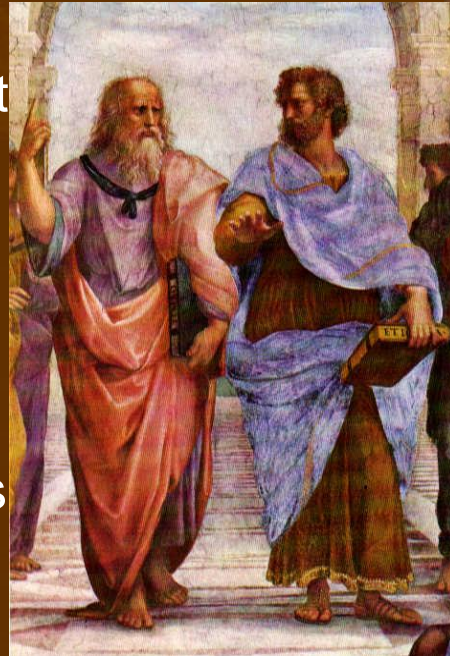
- A Renaissance Man was one who was educated and skilled in many different endeavors
- Leonardo da Vinci is the best example of the Renaissance Man as he was a painter, sculptor, inventor, illustrator, designer, engineer, author and scientist, among other things.





# Renaissance Art

- Humanist, focused on man at the expense of religion
- Used vibrant colors, perspective (depth) and employed realism to capture both the physical and emotional content of subjects
- Greek and Roman themes were popular
- Leading Artists:
  - Michelangelo
  - Leonardo da Vinci
  - Raphael
  - Albrecht Durer





# Renaissance Art in Northern Europe

- Renaissance began in Northern Europe 100 years after Italy!
- Northern European Renaissance Art:
  - Flemish--school of painting (oil based paint, realistic portraits and landscapes)
  - Jan van Eyck--Dutch painter, realistic landscapes, portraits
  - Rembrandt van Rijn--landscapes, portraits, realism, meaning and emotion!
  - Albrecht Durer—"The German Leonardo" woodcuts, engravings, illustrations; most influential artist from central Europe
  - Northern European Renaissance Art: Darker, earth colors, shadowing, indoor scenes, less vivid and vibrant, but still realistic & emotional. Also mixed Christian themes in a more muted setting; introspective!





# Renaissance Literature

- Moveable Type Printing Press (Johannes Gutenberg) created mass market for printed material, increased literacy and led to a boom in Renaissance literature
  - The significance of Gutenberg's printing press
  - Explosion of printed materials
  - --By 1500, 40,000 titles printed and between 8-10 million copies
- Niccolo Machiavelli- "The Prince"-book about modern political theory where the ends justify the means.
- Baldassare Castiglione- "The Book of the Courtier"—book of manners for court officials
- William Shakespeare- most famous Renaissance playwright
- Miguel de Cervantes- wrote "Don Qxiote", satire of the old order



# Renaissance Culture

- Celebrated the primacy of man and reduced religiosity in art and literature; led to secularism in public life!
- Returned to themes from the Classical Civilizations of Greece and Rome in a celebration of Humanism!
- Set the standard for beauty and the aesthetic ideal for man in the universe, while celebrating the unique abilities of Man in the creation of the “Renaissance Man.”





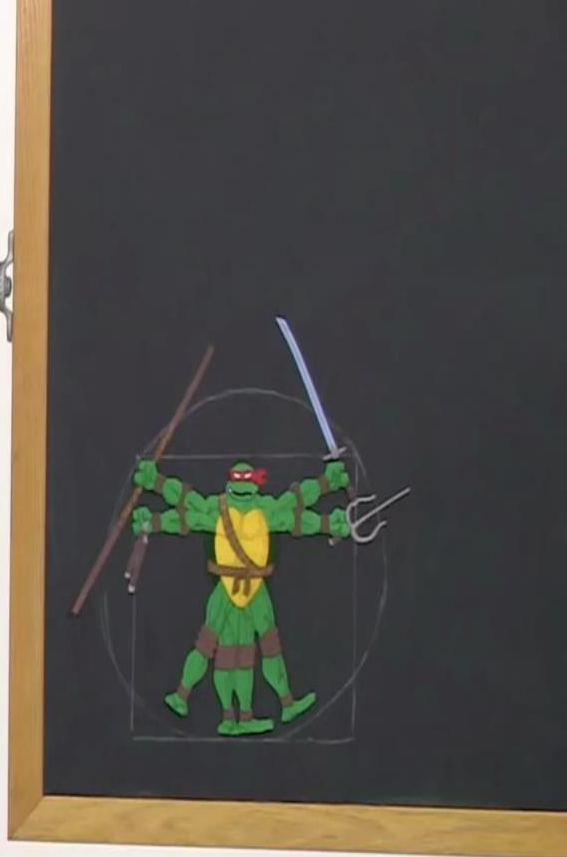
# The Impact of the Renaissance

- The Beginning of the Modern World:

- modern problems
- scientific/rational solutions
- secular government
- Statecraft and diplomacy
- war as business
- money=power
- businessmen are the power brokers
- Modern economic and political systems are created! The Modern World has arrived!



Galleria dell' Accademia, Venice, Italy/Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York



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