

How humanism transformed individuals role assignment

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Throughout time an individual's role in which he fits into society has changed. One of the most noticeable changes in an individual's role in society occurred during the Italian Renaissance during the 14th and 15th centuries with the introduction of Humanism. Humanism gave birth to the concept of individuality a notion which is still alive today. It said that humans mattered and that now mattered, that one should not be part of a whole but rather someone that is unique.

Before Humanism people only thought of the after life, of whether they were going to heaven or hell, but with the introduction of Humanism people became more involved in the present, rather than just thinking of what happened after you died. Humanism transformed individual's role in society by encouraging education in humanity, a well rounded individual, personal virtue and enhancing art. The roles of individuals were exceedingly swayed by the advancements in education. Individuals were encouraged to learn poetry, history and politics.

That these should not be only learned for their own sake, but also to improve oneself. That to only do the necessary to go to heaven was not enough, they had to do their very best in their every day lives. Cosimo de' Medici along with supervisor Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola founded the Florentine Platonic Academy, which was actually not a formal school, but an informal gathering of Florentine humanist. There they worked to revive the works of Plato, an ancient writer whom humanist greatly admired. Such Platonic influences are evident in Pico della Mirandola's statement which says that humans are the only creatures on earth that have the power to rise with the angels or wallow with the pigs. Humanism advocated a well rounded

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individual. Vittorino da Feltre would not only make his students read, but he would also make them do vigorous physical exercise and games. Another educator, Guarino da Verona encouraged the study of classical languages. Humanist studies were not only confined to the classroom as so seen in *Book of the Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione, which embodies the highest ideals of Italian humanism as a guide for the nobility at the court of Urbino.

They were also encouraged to study ancient societies such as the Greeks and the Romans, believing this was the remedy for the present society. Humanism also encouraged people to help their society by combining the talents. An example of that can be found in Florence where three humanists served as chancellors of the city. Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, and Poggio Bracciolini used rhetorical skills to encourage Florentines to revolt against the aggression of Naples and Milan. Both Bruni and Poggio wrote flattering histories of the city.

Leon Battista Alberti, another accomplished humanist scholar, was a noted Florentine architect and builder. They were encouraged to combine their skills in history, art, and literature in their every day lives. This made them see the world with a different perspective, which made them into the individuals they aspired to be. Another change that occurred during the Italian Renaissance was the artistic perspective of this world. People were no longer painting two dimensional art, and non logical portraits. A new technique, *chiaroscuro* a technique that involved light and shadows, gave their paintings more depth and a realistic imagery.

They also made their paintings more realistic by making the objects relative to one another. They emphasised emotions and belief in a universe full of harmony. By encouraging education, advocating a well rounded individual, enhancing the arts and personal virtue Humanism managed to redefine the way individuals saw themselves in their societies. It managed to make people think of themselves more, and make them aware that they are important and that this life mattered. It managed to make people want individuality, a notion which is present till this day.