

# RECIPE FOR A RENAISSANCE:

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**Here are the basic cultural ingredients:**

**ART:** Perspective drawing, vanishing point, proportion, sculptures in the round based on classical Greek models, revival of old Roman methods of building--the arch, improved masonry.

*Examples:* Michelangelo, Donatello, Andrea Del Sarto, Leonardo Da Vinci

**PRINTED WORD:** Gutenberg Bible (1456). Caxton's printing press in England (1476). Monasteries lose their monopoly on literacy.

**ACCEPTANCE OF TRANSLATION:** Illegal translations of the Bible into vernacular languages like German, French, and English--cheaply available via the printing press.

**DIVERSE RELIGION:** Reformation of the church--as unified medieval Catholicism splits into hundreds of "Protesting" (i.e., "Protestant") churches. The major split occurs in 1517 when Martin Luther nails his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The Anglican church splits away later under Henry VIII when he needs a divorce. Protestants elevate the layman and de-emphasize priestly authority.

**CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT:** Growth of the Nation-State under monarchical powers--with ruler seen as having "divine right." This develops out of the medieval idea of "Chain of Being" on one hand, but the model is simultaneously being challenged by Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The nation-state is (more or less) unified geographically rather than split up into a feudal system of many lords and vassals.

**HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY:** Humanism is the belief that education can improve the quality of life for humanity--that reason informs faith. *Homo mensura est*. Man is the measure of all things. Increased reverence for the individual, optimism for a noble future for humanity in this world. This contrasts with the medieval idea of man as being a miserable, sinful wretch who should focus all his attention on the next life and endure suffering in this world as his assigned lot.

**IDEA OF "THE RENAISSANCE MAN":** The idea that a human can excel in numerous areas of expertise. The Renaissance thinker is a poet, a musician, a soldier, a scientist, a sculptor, an architect, a theologian, a philosopher, an artist. (See the careers of Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, etc.)

**KNOWLEDGE AND DISCOVERY:** Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci introduce Europe to the New World--the western hemisphere, doubling the known surface area of earth. Scholars dissect cadavers to learn anatomy. Copernicus kills the Ptolemaic model of the universe. Galileo's telescope reveals entire new planets, and he upholds Copernican theory in the threat of torture from the Inquisition. Leonardo DaVinci does studies of biology and tinkers with flying machines and inventions. Roger Bacon dreams of a "New Atlantis."

**REJECTION OF THE MEDIEVAL AS A "DARK AGE":** A desire to translate and relearn Greco-Roman mythology, poetry, literature, and philosophy, but also to invent a brand new world. A desire to break with medieval tradition.

**A GENERAL ENLARGEMENT OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT:** Optimism for humanity's future, belief in the inherent dignity of humanity, a desire, as Robert Browning phrased it, that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"