

Renaissance humanism through William Shakespeare's Hamle

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ABSTRACT: The philosophical question raised by William Shakespeare's Renaissance humanism in Hamlet is the main topic of this essay. The renowned aphorism "Of all things, man is the measure" (attributed to Protagoras of Abdera, 485–415 BCE) is where the humanist tradition began in Greece, but it wasn't until the Renaissance that it achieved its pinnacle and solidified into a dogma. This article focuses on Renaissance humanism, particularly how it glorifies the idea of the "giant man," a concept mostly seen in William Shakespeare's writings. The play Hamlet is highlighted as an example of Renaissance humanism by the article by highlighting the characteristics of the movement.

Keywords: Hamlet, Renaissance Era, Humanism, William Shakespeare.

INTRODUCTION

The Renaissance (the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) was characterized by advances in elevating and honoring individuals. The Renaissance was an era of "giant people," if humanism is to be interpreted as a philosophy about people that upholds and respects people's status and opens the door for the full development of each person's unique talent, intelligence, and aptitude. Along with time, that "giant" is found in people's wisdom and thought. The fundamental ideological movement that gave Renaissance literature and art its worth was Renaissance humanism. William Shakespeare, a Renaissance humanist who flourished in assimilating the spirit of the times and encapsulating the human spirit in his creative works, was a notable figure in this regard (HADFIELD, 2003, RASPA, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the time, the Renaissance cultural movement came as a fresh breeze that revolutionized every facet of social life in Western Europe. Around 1250, the Italian Proto-Renaissance sprang forth in Italy, and it quickly expanded to neighboring countries in western and central Europe. While some scholars argue that this cultural movement is only an extension of the Middle Ages, many academics think its goal is to revive the ancient Greek and Roman traditions that were lost and buried during that time (BURKE, 1997, BURKE, CLOSSEY; FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO, 2017). But the true objective of the Renaissance cultural movement was to enrich those old cultures in addition to restoring them.

Dispelling "the ghosts of the Middle Ages" (MARX;ENGELS, 1995a, p. 102) shocks Westerners despite the brilliant forms of Greek and Roman civilization, but history is always moving forward. Consequently, the Renaissance aims to foster the creation of the new rather than resurrecting the noble cultural traditions of classical Greece and Rome. The Renaissance cultural movement preserved the spirit of battling for human freedom while honoring the cultural customs of classical Greece and Rome. This is in opposition to the Catholic Church and the spiritual dictatorship of feudalism. This emphasizes humanism, which was the dominant cultural trend of the Renaissance.

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) described the emergence of Renaissance humanism as "the greatest and most progressive turning point that mankind has never seen so far" (MARX;ENGELS, 1995a, p.113). This marked a turning point in history. That pivotal moment occurred in every facet of social life. It significantly altered the material and spiritual lives of Western European culture and gave the continent a fresh, vibrant look.

The Renaissance humanists rationalized that the Church had no justification for outlawing Greco-Roman civilization since it was being restored—a culture that was approved by God. As a result, the Renaissance's fundamental movement in literature and art was the new humanist attitude. "The spirit of battle is at the core of the human spirit. fighting against feudalism on behalf of the urban bourgeoisie. The human spirit is the spirit of fighting for a more progressive ideology, a regime, and a healthier, fuller, and fairer life than the feudal life (MARX;ENGELS, 1995b, p.23)." At the same time, "fighting for the Italian people against the invasion of the foreigners" (MARX;ENGELS, 1995a, p.23).

There has been a time in human history when "culture and art preceded the sword and the gun" (DO, 2001, p. 211). The Renaissance's greatest power emerged from the human spirit. William Shakespeare, like many humanists of the time, utilized his writing to promote love among people. All of his writings and literary characters reflected the essence of the human spirit of the time. A good illustration of that is Hamlet.

"The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark" is the full title of Shakespeare's play Hamlet. It was first performed in 1602 and was composed sometime between 1599 and 1601. The Danish prince Hamlet, who was studying in Germany when he learned of his father's passing, is the subject of Shakespeare's Hamlet. He went back to mourn right away. But when he came back, something tragic happened. His biological uncle Claudius, who had recently ascended to the throne, quickly wed Queen Gertrude, the mother of Hamlet. What he is seeing exacerbates the grief of losing his father: an incestuous mother, a self-centered, ungrateful uncle, a betrayal, the entire court in ecstasy, etc.

CONCLUSION

Renaissance humanism, a central European tendency during this time, left a lasting impression on the literature and artwork of the era. This is an anti-Christian movement that wants to uplift people, free them from the spiritual bonds of feudalism, reject the church and scholasticism, and teach them how to live authentic lives. In that sense, Shakespeare's literary works—most particularly Hamlet—embraced Renaissance humanism. A representative figure of the Renaissance humanism movement is Hamlet. Despite his seeming suffering, Hamlet maintained his optimism by constantly focusing on the virtues of beauty, compassion, and honesty.

Hamlet, a person capable of overcoming cruelty and arousing morality in others, views a gentle death as a protracted slumber and is willing to make sacrifices in the sake of justice. During the Renaissance, he came to represent the human spirit. Shakespeare's humanistic ideas, as seen in the play, not only gave the Renaissance life and brilliance but also spurred humanity's advancement throughout history.

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