

Epicurean Philosophy Vs. Humanism

Post by “Joshua” of April 26, 2023 at 7:33 PM

The Catholic Church for most of its history has had 2 main categories for literature--Sacred and Profane. Sacred literature was scriptural or theological, and Profane was everything else. Except for the outliers like St. Jerome, Profane literature was not necessarily regarded as 'bad'. That connotation came later. It just...wasn't sacred.

There is a similar axis when it comes to outlook, orientation or disposition. It shows up in education--studying Divinity prepared one for life in the church. Studying the humanities prepared one for life outside it.

Humanism is everything that has, as its focus, the nature, life, customs, languages, art, history, folk ways, nations, states, governments, and so on, of human beings.

Divinity has for its object the relationship between man and God. Humanism has for its object the relations between mankind, and between man and himself.

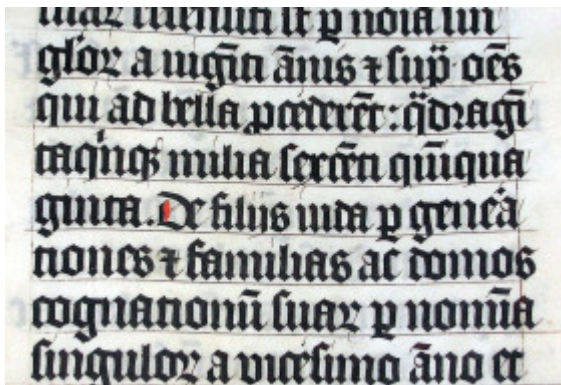
The monasteries of Europe made ornate, jewel-encrusted illuminated manuscripts to enshrine the words of God. Laborious to produce, written in a hand difficult to read (blackletter, an ugly variant of Carolingian miniscule), and in any case usually chained to the shelf or the lectern, these books were made to glorify God, not enlighten men.

In the 14th century, a network of secular Italian scholars in Florence, Venice, and in the Papal Curia in Rome--even in the Curia they were not always in Holy Orders--began to stimulate a demand for a new kind of book. The first major innovation was to rifle the collections of monastic libraries for the works of pagan antiquity. The second was to make them readable again, and to that end these scribes gradually developed their own style of handwriting. Like Blackletter, this new hand, which we now call 'humanist miniscule', was derived from Carolingian miniscule. Unlike Blackletter, it was beautiful--it was clear, graceful, and with room to breath. It could be copied quickly, could be read easily. Reading in the monasteries was meant to be a chore, like cooking, cleaning or plowing--now it was becoming *pleasurable* to read.

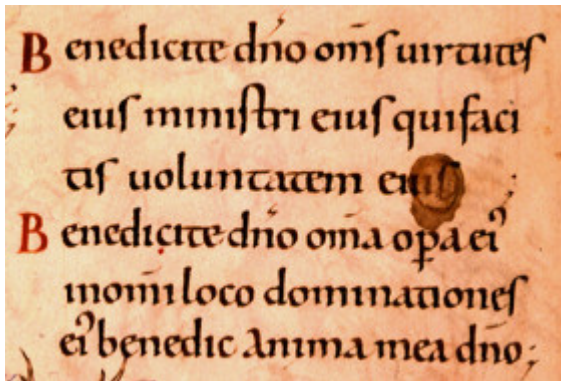
In the monasteries, literary discussions were strictly prohibited. No questions were to be asked, and no doubts entertained.

But the humanists had their eye on this world, and this world has problems. How should a State function? How should armies be raised, trained and drilled, laws be written or established, clean water be supplied? What about navigation, agriculture, architecture, medicine, trade, economics and astronomy? Above all, how should we live? The ancients had written on every one of those topics.

That's humanism in a nutshell, and it was best expressed by two poets; "I am human; nothing human is alien to me", wrote Terence in the 2nd century BC. And Alexander Pope echoed the sentiment in the 18th century--"The proper study of Mankind is Man."



Blackletter



Carolingian miniscule



bone uoluntatis tue coronasti nos **R**e
quiem eternam. **An** Dirige domine
deus meus in conspectu tuo uiam me
am. **An** Conuertere. **Ps.**

Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me ne
que in ira tua corripas me. **M**iserere mei
domine quoniam infirmus sum sana
me domine: quoniam conturbata sunt
omnia ossa mea. **E**t anima mea tur
bata est ualde: sed tu domine usque
quo. **C**onuertere domine et eripe ani
mam meam: saluum me fac propter
misericordiam tuam. **Q**uoniam non
est in morte qui memor sit tui in infer
no autem quis confitebitur tibi. **L**a
borauit in gemitu meo lauabo per sin
gulas noctes lectum meum lachry

