This second paper by Erwin Panofsky, published in 1944, deals with the problem of the periodic concept of the Renaissance—which he believes started in the first half of the 14th century in Italy—as opposed to earlier renascences, or revivals, of antiquity in Western art. Panofsky maintains that the Italian Renaissance was preceded by two earlier renascences, the first, the short-lived Carolingian revival of Classical images in the 9th century, and the second, a 12th-century revitalization of Classical art forms and literature, neither of which, in his view, brought about a total reintegration of Classical form and Classical content. Because there was a new historical consciousness, a trend toward individualism, an increasing preoccupation with a scientific approach to nature, and a dissolution of the compartmentalization characteristic of the later Middle Ages, the Italian Renaissance was able to achieve such a reintegration of form and content, and one that was "total and permanent." To buttress his interpretation of the Renaissance, he cites relevant works of art and literature.

Though it has been challenged by scholars of different disciplines in recent decades, this conception of the Renaissance is traditional in art historical thought (see Carl Neumann, "Ende des Mittelalters? Die Legende der Ablösung des Mittelalters durch die Renaissance," Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte XII [1934], pp. 124–71). Panofsky acknowledges his indebtedness to the views of his friend, Aby Warburg (1866–1929), the noted German art and cultural historian (see his Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Gertrud Bing [Leipzig and Berlin, 1932]). While the present paper is a revision of an address delivered at New York University, its points of view had been set forth, in part, in his and Fritz Saxl's "Classical Mythology in Mediaeval Art" (in Metropolitan Museum Studies IV [1933], pp. 228–80). In 1952, Panofsky delivered ten lectures at Uppsala University on "The Renaissance Problem in the History of Art," and four of these lectures were subsequently revised and considerably expanded in his well-illustrated Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art (Stockholm, 1960; 2d ed., 1965). From the time he undertook work on his doctoral dissertation on Albrecht Dürer, submitted in 1914, the Classical tradition in the art of the West remained a major interest of this great humanist.

For many centuries the history of Europe has been divided into three periods: Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Modern Era, the latter ushered in by the Italian Renascences. This scheme determines the curricula of our colleges and universities; it underlies the organization of our museums and Learned Societies; it plays a part in our everyday speech and thought. No matter where the main incisions are made (as a rule Antiquity ends approximately with the 5th Century A.D. while the Modern Era begins somewhere around 1400 in Italy and somewhere around 1500 in the countries north of the Alps); we generally conceive of history in terms of those
three periods and thereby accept the Italian Renaissance as a quite literally, epoch-making event.

This system of periodization was, characteristically, evolved by the Renaissance itself, and it was summed up, about the middle of the 19th Century, by two great scholars, Jules Michelet of Paris and Jacob Burckhardt of Basle. However, their altogether impressive characterization of the Renaissance as "the discovery of the world and of man"—apparently implying that the Middle Ages had not been aware of either—was bound to arouse opposition. Generations of scholars set out to prove what Michelet and Burckhardt had never seriously questioned: that the Italian Renaissance, however defined, did not emerge like Athene from the head of Zeus. It was shown that innumerable tendencies, ideas, inventions and discoveries credited to the Modern Era had announced themselves in the Middle Ages; that, conversely, the Renaissance was connected with the Middle Ages by a thousand ties; and that the heritage of classical Antiquity had never been lost beyond recuperation. It was conceded that the threads of tradition had been very thin at times, but it was also realized that there had been vigorous revivals long before the "Medicean Age." Thus the Italian Renaissance seemed to have lost its uniqueness; and in recent years, there has been a growing tendency to discard the idea of periodization altogether and to perceive nothing but continuity. "Human nature," writes one of our most distinguished historians, "tends to remain much the same at all times" (which, however, does not prevent him from making a sharp distinction between what even he cannot help calling the Middle Ages and "distant Greece and Rome").

We are faced with three questions. First, was there such a thing as an Italian, or main, Renaissance, which started some time in the 14th Century and reached a climax in the 16th and the 17th? Second, if so had it been preceded by a comparatively steady development, or was it only the last and most effec- tive of several analogous revivals? Third, if the latter, what is the difference between all these "renascences"? Do they differ from one another only in scale or also in structure? And, if they differ in structure, is it still justified to assign to the Italian, or main, Renaissance a special position in comparison with which the earlier revivals remain "mediaeval" phenomena even though they deserve the name of renaissances?

As we now use it, the term Renaissance—Wiedererwachung, as Albrecht Dürer translated it as early as about 1525—implies two apparently different ideas. In a wider sense, it denotes a rebirth of higher culture in general, presupposing, of course, that higher culture in general had been dead, or nearly dead, in the preceding period ("renae literae, renae ars"). In a narrower sense, it denotes a rebirth of classical Antiquity following a complete, or nearly complete, breakdown of classical traditions ("rinascimento dell' antichità"). In the first or wider sense, Renaissance means a universal efflorescence of art, literature, philosophy, science and social accomplishments after a period of decay and stagnation; in the second or narrower sense, it means a creative form of classicism.

Since the notorious quarrel of the "Anciens et Modernes" in 17th Century France, the words "classicality"—let alone "classicism"—and "modernity" have come to express a seemingly irreconcilable contrast. But for the Renaissance itself—beginning with Petrarch, the first to formulate the notion of a "new era" dawning after an "age of darkness"—they were almost synonymous. True, when the writers' interests extended to the domains of art and natural science new elements were bound to enter the concept of rinascimento. Filippo Villani, writing about 1400, saw the revival of the plastic arts not so much in a return to Antiquity as in a...
reversion to nature, from which they "had
strayed away in childish fashion through
the ignorance (insenscia) of the painters."
And Leonardo emphasized, in addition to
verisimilitude ("that picture is the most
praiseworthy which most closely conforms
to the thing it imitates"), the indispensabil-
ity of a mathematical foundation ("who-
ever blames the supreme wisdom of mathe-
matics feeds upon confusion"). But as yet
no conflict was felt between the affirma-
tion of naturalism and mathematical prec-
cision on the one hand, and the reaffirma-
tion of classical standards on the other.
On the contrary, in following nature in-
stead of submitting to a conventional code
of "rough" and "stiff" stylization, and in
substituting a rational theory of propor-
tions and perspective for "mere practice"
and "uncontrolled caprice," the artists
seemed to have regained what classical
Antiquity had already possessed and what
had been submerged only by the combined
effects of barbarous invasion and ec-
clesiastical bigotry. The Renaissance
believed its "modern" style (maniara
moderna) to be nothing but the "good
antique style" (buona maniera antica,
ending with the reign of Constantine), re-
vived to opposition to the "old style"
(maniara vecchia as distinguished from
maniara antica) of the "dark ages" (le
tenebre).

We, too, will find it advisable to accept
this admittedly one-sided identification
of "renata literae, renata ars" with "risae-
cimento dell' antichit" as a preliminary
basis for discussion. In doing this, we can,
for the time being, evade the ticklish ques-
tions of relevance and value. For even he
who would deny that the Renaissance was
an important, let alone a "fortunate," event
may be brought to admit that it was a pecu-
liarily intensive form of reversion to classi-
cal Antiquity. Further, we can legitimately
confine our observations to the Western
world. For, in the Byzantine sphere there
was too much survival of classical tradi-
tions to admit of full-scale revivals;
Byzantium could and did serve as a
permanent storehouse of "dehydrated"
classical art forms and concepts, but it
would never have reached a "Modern Era"
even if the Turks had not marched in in
1452.

1.

It is no accident that the anti-Renaissancist
attacks have mostly come from those who
are not obliged to take a professional in-
terest in the aesthetic aspect of civiliza-
tion. The importance, or even the factual-
ity, of the Italian Renaissance has been
questioned by historians of economic and
social developments, of political and re-
ligious situations and, most particularly,
of natural science; but rarely by students
of literature and hardly ever by historians
of art.

It is indeed difficult to deny that Poli-
tian's description of, let us say, the Rupe
of Europa is more Ovidian than that of an
anonymous French poet of about 1320.
and this not in the letter but in spirit.
Politian treats the original with no less
freedom than the author of the Ovide
Moralisé (he even appropriates several
motifs from his mediæval forerunner);
and he, too, transposes the Latin hex-
ameters into verscial verse. But he is,
like Ovid, voluptuously impassioned and
poetic where the earlier poet is soberly
descriptive and pedantic. He conjures
up the wind-swept vision of a classical
myth where the poor Northerner gives a
detailed and rambling account of an out-
landish kidnapping story. The mere juxtapo-
position of the three texts will speak for
itself.

Ovid (Metamorphoses, II, 870):
Cum deus a terra siccoce a litore sensis
Fissa pedum primis vestigia pont in undis,
Inde abit ulterius, medique per sequora
pont
Fert praedam, pavet hasc litusque ablatu
relictum
Respicit, et dextra cornum tenet, altera
dorsa
Inposita est: tremulae sinuuntur flammea vestes.

Ovide Moralisé, II, 5051 ss.:  
Tant a cil la belle enchanteé  
Que sor le dos li est montée  
Celte, qui ne le cognost pas.  
Li dieus l’emporte pas pour pas.  
Tant qu’il se boute en mer parfonde.  
Des lors s’en court par la grant onde.  
Et sor son dos sa prie emporte.  
Trop s’esbrahim et desconforte  
La pucele, et trop a grant doute.  
Le rivage esgardé et la route  
Des puceles sor le rivage,  
Qui grant doute ont en lor courage  
De lor dame, que ravir volent;  
Des oeuils en plorant le convoient.  
La pucole blas se contient;  
La corne a la destre main tient,  
Et l’autre sor le dos il met.  
Li dieus de nagier s’entremet,  
Tant que mer passe. En Crete vient . . .

Politian (La Giostra, I, st. 105, 106):  
Nell’altra in un formoso e bianco tauro  
Si vede Giove per amor converso  
Portarne il dolce suo ricco tesauro,  
E lei volgere il viso al lito perso  
In atto paventoso: e l be’ crin d’auro  
Scherzono nel petto per lo vento avverso:  
La veste ondeggià e in dritto fa ritorno:  
L’una man tien al dorso, e l’altra al corno.  
Le ignude piante a se ristrette accoglie  
Quasi temendo il mar che lei non bagne:  
Tale atteggiata di paura e doglie  
Par chiami in van le sue dolce compagno;  
Le quali rimase tra fioretti e foglie  
Dolenti ‘Europa’ ciascun da ciascuno piagne.  
‘Europa,’ eonna il lito, ‘Europa, riedi’—  
E l tor nota, e talor gli bacia i piedi.

The difference, it is hoped, will be evident from a translation which is intentionally literal. First the Ovid:

But now the god, little by little, sets the cloven imprints of his feet into the first waves, away from the land and the dry shore; thence he goes farther, and carries his prize through the waters of the high sea. She is struck with terror and, borne away, looks back to the reft vessel and the shore: her right hand grasps her torn, the other clings to his back. Her fluttering garments billow in the breeze.

Then the Ovide Moralisé:

So much has he charmed the beautiful one that she has mounted on his back, who did not know him. The god carries her off step by step until she plunges into the deep sea. Then he runs through the big wave and carries his prey off on his back. Greatly stunned and discomfited is the damsel and much in fear. She looks upon the shore and upon the path of the maidens on the shore who in their minds have great fear for their mistress whom they see abducted; weeping, they follow her with their eyes. The damsel carries herself well, she holds his horn with her right hand and places the other on his back. The god sets out to swim so as to cross the sea. He comes to Crete . . .

And the Politian:

In the other [panel] one sees love, transformed into a beautiful white bull by the power of love, as he carries away his sweet rich treasure; and her, in a posture of terror, as she turns her face to the lost shore. Her lovely golden hair plays upon her breast in the contrary breeze, and her gown billows and fluctuates back. One hand clings to his back, the other to his horn.

She draws her bare feet close onto herself as though afraid of the sea lest it might wet them. Thus, crouching down with fear and pain, she seems to call out in vain to her sweet companions: but they have remained amidst the flowers and verdure and, grief-stricken, each of them wails “Europa!” “Europa!” resounds the shore, “Europa, come back!” And she swells on [or: looks around?], and now and then he kisses her feet.

In the domain of the Fine Arts—and we should bear in mind that the very idea of separating architecture, sculpture and
painting from the humbler crafts and skills, and of uniting them under the heading of “arti del disegno,” is an innovation of the Italian Renaissance, utterly foreign to mediæval thought—the resurgence of classicalising tendencies is so evident that we are apt to dismiss it because of its very obviousness. We would no longer say that Cinquecento architecture, sculpture and painting are admirable because they conform to the standards of classical Antiquity, and that Gothic architecture, sculpture and painting are obnoxious because they do not. But we can hardly deny that, quite apart from the question of “better” or “worse,” Palladio’s Villa Rotonda (Fig. 2*) is more closely akin in form and essence to the Pantheon (Fig. 1) than the choir of Amiens Cathedral (Fig. 3) is to either; and that the same is true of Sansovino’s Bacchus in relation to, let us say, the Angel Gabriel in Reims (Fig. 16, left) on the one hand, and the Apollo Belvedere on the other. And the point is that there was an interval of more than 1100 years between the Pantheon and Amiens Cathedral, and an interval of almost 1600 years between the Apollo Belvedere and the Angel Gabriel; whereas only about 300 years separate Amiens Cathedral and the Angel Gabriel from the Villa Rotonda and Sansovino’s Bacchus, respectively. If we should insist on using Italian architecture and statuary for comparison we might refer to the Cathedrals of Orvieto or Milan instead of Amiens and Reims, in which case the chronological interval between Renaissance and Gothic would even shrink to a mere two hundred or one hundred years; and if we should stay in the North and substitute for Amiens and Reims the Parish Church at Annaberg in Saxony or the sculptures by Tilmann Riemenschneider this interval would be reduced to almost zero. Something fairly decisive, then, must have happened in Italy during the 15th Century.

Thus the historian of art and literature, at least, will have to admit the reality of an Italian Renaissance which, with surprising impetus, superseded a period of utter non-classicality. However, this period of utter non-classicality, which we call Gothic, had not come to an end at the turn of the steady decline of classical traditions. It had followed upon a phase of comparative classicism, and this in turn had been preceded by a succession of rapprochements and estrangements.

The first of these rapprochements, already emphasized by Antonio Manetti in the 15th Century, is known as the Carolingian revival. During and after the disruption of the Roman Empire the interrelated and overlapping processes of barbarization, orientalization and Christianization had indeed resulted in an almost general eclipse of classical culture. Oases were left, or established, in certain places in Italy, in the south of Gaul, in Spains and, especially, in the British Isles; but just those regions which were to form the nucleus of the Carolingian Empire represented, from the classical point of view, a cultural vacuum. As happens so often in history, it was precisely in this vacuum that could occur the conflux and fusion of forces which was to produce a new, specifically North-West European civilization; and chief among these forces was, naturally enough, the classical or, to speak more exactly, Roman heritage. When Charlemagne set out to reform political and ecclesiastical administration, communications, art, literature, scholarship, and even script, his guiding idea was the “Renovatio Romani Imperii.” He had to invite a Briton as his chief adviser in cultural matters, and his grandson had to enlist the help of an Irishman to obtain a good translation of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite’s Greek; but it all amounted to quote from a contemporary writer, to an “Aurea Roma iterum renovata.”

* Illustrations accompanying this selection appear on pages 517 to 520.
The reality and magnitude of this movement cannot be questioned. In ninety-eight out of a hundred cases the fact that we can read the Latin poets, historians and scientists in the original is due to the industry of Carolingian scribes, for very few Roman classics seem to have been copied between about 600 and the end of the 8th Century. Nor can it be doubted that the Carolingian writers learned their lesson well. Their often excellent verses in classical meters fill four fat volumes of the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, and their ear became astonishingly sensitive to the refinements of Latin prose. Thanks to Charlemagne, writes Lupus of Ferrières about 835 to Eginhard, the biographer of the Great Emperor, the studies have raised their heads; now (meaning, under Louis the Pious whose reign struck Lupus as a let-down after the fervent beginnings) they are again disparaged, and writers “begin to stray from that dignity of Cicero and the other classics which the best of the Christian writers also sought to emulate.” But in Eginhard’s work—epoch-making indeed in that it reinstated biography as a fine art, taking Suetonius’ Lives of the Emperors as a model—Lupus still finds “that elegance of meaning, that exquisiteness in the connection of ideas” which he admires in the classics (whom he simply calls “auctores”): “In it, I perceive sentences not encumbered and involved with overlong periods but perfect in their measured length.”

In architecture, sculpture and painting the back-to-Rome movement had to compete with orientalizing tendencies on the one hand, and with insular influences on the other. For the same British Isles which had been the most important refuge of classical traditions in literature and scholarship had developed a revolutionarily anti-classical style in the arts of design. However, the presence of these opposing forces stimulated rather than weakened the energy of the revivalist impulse. Charlemagne’s Palace Chapel at Aix-la-Chapelle is, in a general way, patterned after the Early Byzantine Church of S. Vitale in Ravenna; but it received a west front suggested by Roman city gates, and its exterior was enlivened, not by the oriental blind-arcades as seen in S. Vitale but by Corinthian pilasters of anxious classical cast. In the Torhalle at Lorsch (Fig. 4) the polychromatic facing of the wall harks back to the pre-Carolingian period; but its conception and structure—not to mention its orthodox composite capitals—presuppose the Arch of Constantine and, possibly, the Colosseum. The idea of incorporating towers with the basilica, so fundamentally important for the development of later ecclesiastical architecture, originated, it seems, in Asia Minor; but the plan of the basilica itself was programmatically revised “Romano more,” that is to say, after the fashion of the three great Roman Basilicas, St. Peter’s, St. Paul’s, and St. John’s in the Lateran. For, from the Carolingian point of view, Constantinian architecture was no less but perhaps even more “classical” than the Pantheon or the Theatre of Marcellus—just as a “Tulliana gravitas” was found and greeted in the Christian Fathers.

In the representational arts—all but extinct on the pre-Carolingian continent—the spirit of classical Antiquity looms even larger. Stylistically, the vivacity of insular design remained a powerful influence throughout; but as far as the repertory of motifs is concerned, the fantastic interlaces and animal patterns of Irish-Anglo-Saxon art were largely restricted to metal ornament and calligraphy, and the oriental component had been virtually neutralized by the beginning of the 9th Century. Instead the artists turned to the classical tradition as far as it was accessible to them—both physically and psychologically—in Roman gems and coins and, above all, in late-antique or Early Christian book illuminations and ivory carvings mostly of the 4th and 5th Centu-
ries: for, as could already be observed in architecture, no sharp distinction was made between pagan and Christian Antiquity.

Thus vegetal decoration began to rival with insular design even in the initials and ornament pages of illuminated manuscripts. Miniatures and ivory plaques were framed with egg-and-dart patterns, rinceaux borders or acanthus bands; and a determined effort was made to recapture the "illusionistic" values of Graeco-Roman art: to do justice to the human figure as a natural organism, to space as a three-dimensional medium, and to light as that which conditions the surface appearance of all solid bodies. For the greater part these "illusionistic" values had been lost or suppressed for several centuries; the Anglosaxon school had turned this loss into a gain by converting the figure and its environment into a rigidly stylized and superbly decorative pattern of planes and lines (Fig. 5); but on the pre-Carolingian continent figural representations, if attempted at all, verged upon the grotesque (Fig. 6).

Compared with such 8th Century renderings, the white-robed Evangelists in what may have been Charlemagne's personal Gospel Book, softly modelled and gracefully posed in front of a naturalistic landscape background, give an impression so deceptively antique that they have been ascribed—not quite convincingly—to artists from Byzantium (Fig. 7). The Perseus from a 9th Century manuscript in Leyden might almost have stepped out of a Pompeian mural (Fig. 17), and the lurky scenery in the Utrecht Psalter, alive with classical buildings and personifications, bucolic animals and light-dissolved trees (Fig. 8), evokes the memory of Campanian Topographiae and of the famous Odyssey Landscapes in the Vatican Library.

To mention classical personifications and Perseus is to hint at what is, from our point of view, perhaps the most important aspect of the Carolingian renovatio. Classical personifications of natural forces such as Oceanus and Tellus, Sol and Luna, Helios and Aestas, Atlas and Orcus, had already been admitted to Biblical scenes in such Early Christian examples as the 5th Century archetype of the Utrecht Psalter; and classical personifications of human emotions such as Cupid and Jest, Ire and Patience, had been given active parts, also in the 5th Century, in Prudentius' Psychomachia (equally a 'favorite of Carolingian copyists), which describes the combat between the Christian Virtues and the Vices. But Persus was an unregenerate pagan. Like all the other constellations and the planets—most of which we still designate by analogous appellations—he was, in name and appearance, a purely mythological character; in copying the illustrated Aratea manuscripts in which all these mythological pictures occur, the Carolingians showed a remarkable lack of Christian prejudice. They also copied numerous other illustrated books of a purely secular nature: treatises on zoology, botany and Roman public offices: the Comedies of Terence; calendars; and encyclopedias.

In short, in addition to reinstating classical motifs and methods of treatment the artists of the 9th Century revived what we shall henceforth refer to as classical "images": figures or groups of figures classical not only in form but also in content. And chief among these were the pictures of the Greek and Romar gods and demi-gods who thus came to be transmitted to the mediaeval world in their authentically pagan shape and form.

The Carolingian revival, which virtually ended with the death of Charles the Bald in 877, was followed, to borrow from C. R. Morey, by "a period as barren as the seventh century"; and this was succeeded by a new efflorescence which began, roughly speaking, a hundred years later. This new efflorescence is often spoken of as the "Ottonian Renaissance" with reference to its manifestations in Germany, and as the
towards Christ just as do some of the apostles in the Ascension picture. At the same time, not all of the agitated martyrs can be derived from a composition of the Ascension, and this is true particularly of the most classical ones. One must, therefore, search the classical repertory for a scene in which nude figures are depicted in violent postures, recoiling under the impact of an invisible force. The subject which immediately comes to our mind is the battle of the giants against the gods as represented in the tenth-century Nicander miniature in Paris (Fig. 7). One may, for example, compare the martyr at the extreme lower right, in the three-quarter pose seen from the back, who throws up his left arm, with the giant in the lower center of the miniature. The depicted martyrs in the front row who hold one arm under the chin and the other before the breast, not only show a similar formal conception, but express the same sentiment as that of the central giant in the mosaic of Piazza Armerina (Fig. 8). It is, of course, to be expected of a Byzantine artist of the tenth century that, in spite of a very good understanding of the organic structure of the human body, he would object to the muscular exuberance of the giants and make his martyrs more slender and thereby more ascetic and ethereal.

There are other types among the Forty Martyrs who do not fit the formula of a recoiling giant, yet are very classical in appearance and must therefore have been derived from another iconographical realm. Among the various classical types and models involved I should like to point out only one more that is particularly striking, and revealing of the mentality of a Middle Byzantine artist. In the second row close to the center is a group consisting of an older, bearded martyr who turns to one side and tenderly places his left arm around the neck of a youth. If one can forget for a moment the context and define the sentiment conveyed by this group, one would describe it as one of affection, intimacy, with even a trait of importunity. There was a famous group in classical antiquity, existing in more than twenty replicas, which embodied just this sentiment and apparently stimulated the Byzantine artist to incorporate it in the composition of the Forty Martyrs, and which, as is generally agreed today, represented Pan instructing Daphnis in the playing of the syrinx. The replica in the museum of Naples (Fig. 40) is particularly close as far as the pose and the profile head of the obtrusive Pan are concerned. Daphnis is turning his head away, but this is by no means the rule in this group, and in another replica in the Museo Nazionale in Rome the charmed youth turns his head towards Pan, thus showing a response not basically different from that of our youthful martyr. In spite of these similarities, it must not necessarily be assumed that the model of the ivory carver was actually a sculptured group; indeed, for an ivory of the "Malatarsche Gruppe" one would think first of all of a painted model. Actually, a rather badly preserved fresco from Herculanum depicts a variant of the Pan-Daphnis group, in which Marsyas and Olympus are represented in very much the same poses conveying the same meaning, and it is entirely possible that the model of the ivory carver represented Marsyas and Olympus rather than Pan and Daphnis. The Gigantomachy and the erotic group of music-teaching are indeed heterogeneous realms out of which the Christian artist chose his models for martyrs shivering and freezing to death in an icy lake.

Classical mythology and the forms in which it had crystallized had over-valorizing power in Byzantine art. After the classical features had somewhat worn off in the centuries following the Macedonian renaissance they reappeared with renewed vigor in the Palaeologian period, as may be seen in one of the finest creations of this period, a fourteenth-century portable mosaic icon of the Forty Martyrs in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (Fig. 41).
Otto Demus has clearly demonstrated that in its classicizing features it is akin to the ivory just discussed and yet sufficiently different to exclude a direct descent. The attitudes of the martyrs are here again more restrained, thus more closely approximating the Early Byzantine ideal of dignified behavior. At the same time the faces are much more individualized and expressive and, in this respect, more classical than the lively and yet uniform heads in the ivory. It will be noted that in the Dumbarton Oaks icon there are new types of martyrs that exist neither in the early fresco in Rome nor in the Berlin ivory, as, for instance, the second from the right in the front row who, in despair, holds his right hand close to his forehead. This type appears once more in the Gigantomachy of Piazza Armerina in the upper left corner (Fig. 8). Admittedly such a pose could also be found in other classical works, but the fact that so many gestures can be traced to this specific context, and that a copy of the Gigantomachy is known to have existed in tenth-century Byzantine painting, make the connection between these two scenes plausible from both the artistic and the historical points of view. One gets the impression that the ivory and the mosaic bark back to two different, though related, archetypes, and that whereas the model for the ivory was a creation of the Macedonian renaissance, the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic reflects the mind of an artist who tried to vitalize and, at the same time, to retain the more hieratic, Early Christian composition, infusing into it only a limited number of classical poses.

However, in both cases the influence of a Gigantomachy upon a martyrdom scene is not confined to an agreement of the poses of a few figures, since both events concern a group of men who, one by one, are meeting a slow death, without being able to escape or to offer effective opposition, and we presume that the Byzantine artists who designed a classicized version of the Forty Martyrs were well aware of this similarity of content and meaning as well as of form.

VIII. Combination of Mythological and Christian Elements

A free attitude with regard to the classical heritage is shown by those Byzantine artists who dared to place undisguised classical and Christian elements side by side, thus striving for a harmony between two cultures which at an earlier stage had sometimes been antagonistic towards each other. After the end of iconoclasm, when classical culture was no longer a living force, imperial court and patriarchal palace alike made classical learning a subject of humanistic endeavor, not only to be tolerated but to be cultivated insofar as it did not endanger the Christian foundation of Byzantine civilization.

One of the most successful examples of such a synthesis is the title miniature of the well-known Psalter manuscript in Paris, cod. gr. 139, which, as we believe, dates from the tenth century. David, playing the harp in the midst of his flock, forms the nucleus of the composition (Fig. 42), and he is surrounded by a wealth of classical motifs of which the most prominent is the personification of Melody who leans on his shoulder despite his apparent indifference to her. The closest parallel to this personification is Io, as she appears in several frescoes in Pompeii, seated on a rock and watched ever by Argus; the representation most closely allied to our miniature being that from the Macellum (Fig. 43). Hugo Buchthal, while admitting the close similarity of the two females, nevertheless objected to the idea that the illustrator of the Psalter derived Io from a composition like that of the Macellum fresco; David and Melody appeared to him to be so much a group composition that he postulated a classical prototype depicting a pair of lovers seated together on a rock. These
own keen vision or our own stature but because we are raised aloft by their gigantic magnitude."

An urge was felt to go back to the Greek fountainheads of philosophy and natural science. (It is revealing that even a purely theological text, the writings of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, was translated afresh about 1160, after three centuries had been satisfied with the translation made for Charles the Bald.) Enormous emphasis was placed on the study of the Roman classics, however secular, and on good Latin; and a vivid interest was taken, not only in the anecdotic content but also in the legendary and religious background of classical literature. It was in the same 12th Century that a poet from Brittany, Benoît de St.-More, retold the story of Troy in French, thereby making the world of Virgil accessible to mundane society, and that an English scholar, possibly Alexander Neckham, wrote the standard handbook of classical mythology, known as the "Mythographus III."

A novel enthusiasm was also aroused by the visible remains of Roman civilization; but until the "proto-Renaissance" movement had spread to Chartres and Reims, they appealed, significantly, to the curiosity and imagination of the scholar, connoisseur and poet rather than to the imitative instinct of the stone carver. There came into being an entirely new type of antiquarian literature as represented by the *Graphia Aureae Urbis Romae*, the *Mirebilia Urbis Romae* and the *Herculii sive de coloribus Romanorum*. An Englishman, Magister Gregorius, not only admired and described the Roman antiquities, both buildings and sculptures, but also measured some of the edifices. Henry, Bishop of Winchester about 1150, acquired in Rome a number of statues made by pagan artists "*subtili et laborioso magis quam studiose errore*"; and Hildebert of Lavardin praised the ruins of the Eternal City in distichs so polished in form and sensitive in feeling that they were long ascribed to a poet of the 5th Century.

It will always remain a memorable fact that Guido Colonna had to turn to a Breton, and Petrarch to an Englishman, when they wished to acquaint their Italian countrymen with the gods and heroes of their own ancestors. But as for the Northern world itself, "proto-humanism" shared the fate of the "proto-Renaissance." In the course of the 13th and 14th Centuries the content of classical philosophy, historiography and poetry was as completely "absorbed" in the mediaeval system of thought and imagination as the classical contrapposto was in the "Gothic sway"—partly through scholastic reinterpretation (as was the case with Aristotle), partly through modernizing, often paraphrastic translation into the vernacular (as was the case with Livy, Valerius Maximus and ultimately Aristotle, too), and partly through the reckless superimposition of a "Christian" meaning (as was the case with Ovid and the Mythographers). Unlike Bernard of Chartres, John of Salisbury, Bernardus Silvestris, or Alanus ab Insulis, the great scholastics of the 13th and 14th Centuries no longer read, or cared to read, Cicero, Virgil and Horace in the original, and the days of classicizing verse-making were over. "Look for a [Latin] poet," says Hauréau, "you will not find a single one; the hexameter and the pentameter have gone out of fashion; little rhetorical pieces, now pious now obscene—that is the whole poetry of the time." In fact the very idea of Thomas Aquinas or William of Ockham writing a poem in elegiac couplets strikes one as almost ludicrous.

Our two first questions, then, can safely be answered in the affirmative: there was an Italian, or main, Renaissance, and this was preceded by two earlier renascences. What remains is the third and most absorbing question as to the difference among these three.

The Carolingian men of letters, we remember, preserved, transcribed, emended and at times commented upon all classical
manuscripts within their reach and could write excellent Latin prose and verse. But none of them could have thought of composing an epic entitled “Venus and Adonis,” a play about the Death of Orpheus or a pastoral staged in Arcady. Similarly, the Carolingian artists were skillful and interested enough to make successful copies of what we have termed classical “images”—figures, or groups of figures, in which classical form was happily united with classical content. But none of them could have thought of employing this treasury of images as a vocabulary with the aid of which new visual poems might be written. They would either leave such images in their original context, as when they copied entire illustrated manuscripts; or they would transfer them to another medium, as when they adorned an ivory box with scenes from Virgil’s Bucolics or a circular silver medallion—now lost—with a kind of celestial map; or they would carry them over, lock, stock and barrel, into a Christian narrative, as when the niches of the Evangelists were beset with simulated gems or when renderings of the Crucifixion were enriched by perfectly classical personifications of the Sun and the Moon, the Earth and the Ocean. But with this mere retention of classical images the matter ended.

The Jupiters and Perseuses in the Carolingian Araeia manuscripts, the Sols and Lunas in the Carolingian Crucifixion plaques, and the Atlas and River Gods in the Utrecht Psalter are classical enough in appearance and often very spirited in behavior; yet they have not attained the status of free agents. They are either confined, as an insect to a piece of amber, to the prison of an established context, or immobilized by having been transplanted to the foreign soil of a Christian narrative. It took Raphael and Titian to invent such compositions as Jupiter Embracing Cupid or Perseus Delivering Andromeda (Fig. 19)—compositions, that is, in which classical images, recreated rather than retained, are able to grow, to change and to multiply within what appears to be their native sphere.

To put it briefly: the Carolingians salvaged the classical sentences and concepts in their writings; and they were able to use them, as it were, by way of quotation. It was beyond their power and their wish to activate them.

The process of activation started with the “proto-Renaissance” and “proto-humanism” of the 12th Century. Now artists as well as poets began to “play around” with classical images and themes instead of merely salvaging them; but they did this under a peculiar condition: the results of which strike the modern beholder at times as decidedly funny. When a 12th Century poem, such as Bernardus Silvestris’ Liber mathemathicus or Alanus ab Insulis’ Anticlaudianus, is written in classical meter and employs a studiedly classical vocabulary, it does not as a rule project its theme into the classical past but expresses the writer’s own opinions and experiences. (It should be noted, in this connection, that even Hildebert of Lavardin is careful to justify the destruction of so much pagan beauty as a prerequisite for the victory of the Cross.) When, on the other hand, the writer deals with such subjects as the Trojan War or the stories of Ovid he prefers the vernacular—or at least a very non-classical Latin—and always characterizes the costume, manners, speech and environment of his characters in terms of purely medieval imagination.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the representational arts. Wherever a sculptor or painter borrows a figure or a group from a classical work of art he almost invariably invests it with a non-classical, viz., Christian, meaning; conversely, wherever he borrows a theme from classical poetry, mythology or history he almost invariably presents it in a non-classical, viz., contemporary, form.

As for the mediaevalization of classical motifs by the infusion of Christian content, we need only remember the examples already adduced: the transformation of
Antoninus Pius into St. Peter, of Dionysus into a witness of the Presentation of Christ, of funerary effigies into the Resurrected, of Roman matrons and Phaedras into Virgin Marys (Figs. 11-19). On the façade of St. Mark’s in Venice there can still be seen two large reliefs, walled in as companion pieces: one, a Roman work of the 3rd Century, depicts Hercules Carrying the Erymanthean Boar—the other, executed almost exactly one thousand years later, employs the same composition, suitably changed as to costume and attributes, for a representation of the Saviour Carrying the Human Soul in the Cage of a Stag.

The mediaevalization of classical subject matter by presentation in contemporary form could be exemplified by literally thousands of instances. Hector and Andromeda, Aeneas and Dido, Jason and Medea are represented as courtly knights and ladies fighting or disputing themselves in a mediaeval setting. Jupiter appears as a mediaeval ruler, his raven occasionally nimbed after the fashion of St. Gregory’s dove. Europa sits on her harmless-looking bull in the 14th Century riding dress, and Thisbe waits for Pyramus on a Gothic tomb slab whose inscription “Hic situs est Ninius rex” is preceded by the then indispensable cross (Fig. 20).

After the Carolingian salvage of classical images, then, we have, beginning with the 12th Century, a revitalization of classical art forms within the limits of a non-classical program, and, on the other hand, a revitalization of classical subject matter within the limits of a non-classical mode of depiction. It may be thought that this curious dichotomy resulted only from the fact that the sculptors of St.-Gilles, Reims, Pisa and Venice worked from visual models whereas the illustrators of the Ovid paraphrases or the Roman de Troie had to rely on textual sources. This is of course both true and important. It can be shown, however, that a divorce of classical form from classical content took place, not only in the absence of a representational tradition, but also in spite of a representational tradition still available. Even where the Carolingian salvage action had rescued those authentic classical “images” which still preserved a perfect union of classical form with classical content, this union was deliberately abandoned or even destroyed in the 13th and 14th Centuries.

The last Prudentius manuscript (which, incidentally, contains the Pyramus and Thisbe miniature reproduced in our Fig. 20) dates from 1228; then the tradition breaks off. The Carolingian Terence manuscripts, conscientiously reproducing the gestures, costumes and masks of the Roman stage, were copied—with their classical features gradually diluted but always recognizable—up to the end of the 12th Century; after that, there is a gap of more than two hundred years, and when the Comedies were illustrated again (first in the Terence des Duces of ca. 1408) the pictures show 15th Century personages in a 15th Century setting. In the illustrations of astronomical texts, finally, the classical images, faithfully copied by the 9th Century artists, were retained, with changes limited to style, for approximately three hundred years. From the middle of the 13th Century, however, they, too, were replaced by entirely different ones, either borrowed—or rather re-borrowed—from Arabic sources or freely developed from textual descriptions. Thus the figures of the constellations wandered back to the West in a thoroughly orientalized and, if one may say so, de-mythologized form. Perseus, for instance, with his posture changed so as to conform more closely to the actual position of the stars and dressed up in oriental costume, looks like a Persian prince rather than a Greek hero (Fig. 18) and carriers, owing to a visual misunderstanding, a demon’s head instead of the caput Medusae (which, by the way, is why we speak today of the star Algol, Ra’s al Ghul meaning “head of the demon”).

The figures of the planets were even entirely discarded in favor of new ones, con-
structed on the basis of freshly imported astrological texts, so that Venus appears as a young lady smelling a rose, Jupiter as a rich gentleman with gloves in his hand, and Mercury as a Bishop (Fig. 21).

It was for the Italian Renaissance to reintegrate classical form with classical content, and it was by this reintegration that the classical images—first salvaged, then split asunder and finally recomposed—were really "reborn" (Fig. 19). But even in Italy, not to mention the Northern countries, the Gothic tradition did not succumb without a struggle. In the more conservative paintings, engravings and book illuminations of the Quattrocento (an instructive example being the well-known Vergilii Riccardianus of about 1470, which is more nearly akin to the mediaeval Roman de Troie manuscripts than to the Vatican Virgil of the 5th Century) Helen and Paris, Venus and Aeneas, Orpheus and the Muses are still depicted alla francese and not all'antica. It took the energies of Maestina, Pollaiuolo, Botticelli and other determined modernists to pave the way for Raphael, Correggio and Titian.

This would appear to answer the third of our questions. The two mediaeval renais-

sances, the Carolingian revival on the one hand, and the "proto-Renaissance" and "proto-humanism" of the 12th and 13th Centuries on the other, differ not only in scale but also in structure. But they differ less essentially from one another than both of them differ from the Italian, or main, Renaissance. For, to put it very briefly, the two mediaeval renais-
sances were limited and tradi-
tory, the Italian "rinasimento dell'antichità" was total and permanent.

The Carolingian renaissance pervaded the whole of the Empire and left no sphere of civilization untouched. But it was limited in that its artistic activities did not as yet include major sculpture in stone; in that the models selected for imitation were, as a rule, productions of the minor arts and did not antedate the 4th and 5th Centuries, and that classical concepts and images were salvaged but not yet activated. The renaissance of the 12th and 13th Centuries, on the other hand, sought and achieved monumentality, penetrated to the imitation of statues and reliefs of much higher antiquity, and emancipated classical concepts and images from what we have called their quotation status. But it was limited in that it represented only a special current within the larger stream of contemporary civilization and was restricted to certain particular regions; in that there was, according to these regions, a marked distinction between a recreative and a literary or antiquarian response to the Antique; and in that, in art as well as in literature, classical "form" and classical content were not assimilated or even retained as a unity. Both these renais-
sances, finally, were transitory in that they were followed by periods of relative or—in the case of Gothic—nearly absolute estrangement from the classical past.

How things were changed by the Italian, or main, Renaissance can be illustrated by a small but significant incident. The manuscript of the illustra-
tions of which include the Perseus reproduced in Fig. 17 had been left untouched for about four hundred years. Then a well-meaning scribe saw fit to repeat the entire text in 13th Century script (text illustration). He still could read the beautiful "Rustic Capital" of the 9th Century, but he evidently thought that it would stomp his contemporaries and all future readers. But we, men of the 20th Century, find the Carolingian "Rustic Capital" much easier to read than his spiky "Gothic"; and this tells the whole story in...
a nutshell. Our own script and letterpress derive from the Italian Renaissance types which had been patterned, in conscious defiance of the Gothic tradition, upon Carolingian models which in turn had been evolved on a classical basis. The “Gothic” script, one might say, symbolizes the transitory nature of both mediaeval renascences. Our modern script and letterpress proclaim the fact that the Italian Renaissance had come to stay.* Thereafter, the classical element in our civilization could be opposed (though it should not be forgotten that opposition is merely another form of dependence), but it could not disappear again. Even in Mannerism and Baroque, even in our own post-impressionist era (see Maillol, Picasso, Chirico or Salvador Dali) the amount of classicity is a matter of accent and interpretation rather than one of presence or absence.

In the Middle Ages there was, in relation to classical Antiquity, a cyclical succession of assimilative and non-assimilative phases. From the Renaissance classical Antiquity is constantly with us, whether we like it or not. It lives in our mathematics and natural sciences. It has built our theatres and movie houses as opposed to the mediaeval mystery stage. It haunts the speech of our cab drivers as opposed to that of the mediaeval peasant; and it is firmly entrenched behind the thin but thus far unbroken glass walls of history, philosophy and archaeology.

The rise of these three disciplines—utterly absent from the Middle Ages in spite of all the Carolingian and 12th Century “humanists”—evidences a truly fundamental difference between the mediaeval and the modern attitude toward classical Antiquity—a difference which makes us understand the essential strength and the essential weakness of both. In the Italian, or main, Renaissance the classical past was looked upon from a fixed, unalterable distance, quite comparable to the distance between the eye and the object in that most characteristic invention of the same Renaissance, focussed perspective. As in perspective, this distance prohibited direct contact—owing to what may be called an ideal projection plane—but permitted a total and objectivized view. Such a distance is absent from both the mediaeval renascences.

The Carolingian revival had been started because it was felt that “a great many things needed overhauling: the administrative system, the liturgy, the script, the Latin and the arts. When this was realized people turned to Antiquity—both pagan and Christian, and even with a strong initial emphasis on the latter—much as a man whose motor car had broken down and can neither be repaired nor replaced might fall back on a Lincoln 1928, inherited from his grandfather, which, when reconceived (and let us not forget that the Carolingians constantly speak of renovatio and not of “rebirth”), will still give excellent service and may even prove more comfortable than the newer model had been. In other words, the Carolingians approached Antiquity with the feeling of legitimate heirs who had neglected or even forgotten their property for a time and now put it to precisely those uses for which it had been intended.

The purely mediaeval attitude toward classical Antiquity, on the other hand—just like that toward Judaism—is characterized by an ambivalence which we, having gone through the Italian “rinascimento,” find very hard to reexperience. The Old Testament was recognized as the foundation of the New, so that the Apostles—an interesting analogy to the above mentioned sperçu of Bernard of Chartres—

* It is amusing to note that even the Nazis had ultimately to give up an eight years' attempt to enforce the general use of the allegedly German “Gothic” and had to revert to the “normal.” viz., classical script, not without claiming, of course, that this was in reality even more German in character (W. W. Schutz and B. de Sevin, German Home Front, London, 1943, p. 187).
could be represented on the shoulders of the Prophets. But at the same time, nay, on the same portal, the Synagogue could be depicted as a blind, benighted enemy, surmounting a Jew whose eyes are put out by the devil (Fig. 22). Similarly, there was, on the one hand, a sense of unbroken connection or even continuity with classical Antiquity, linking the mediaeval German Empire to Julius Caesar, mediaeval music to Pythagoras, mediaeval philosophy to Plato and Aristotle, mediaeval grammar to Donatus—and, on the other, the consciousness of an insurmountable gap that separated the Christian present from the pagan past. The classical sphere was not approached historically but naïvely, as something far-off yet still present and, for this very reason, both assimilable and potentially dangerous. It is significant that the classical philosophers and poets used to be depicted in the same oriental costume as the Jewish Prophets, and that the 13th Century spoke of the Romans and their monuments as "sarrazin": heath-enish in a quite contemporary sense.

For want of this perspective distance classical civilization could not be viewed as a coherent cultural system in which everything belonged together. On the contrary, every classical phenomenon, instead of belonging to all the other classical phenomena, had to have one point of contact, and also one point of divergence, with the mediaeval present; it had to satisfy both the sense of continuity and the feeling of opposition. Now we can see why the union of classical form and classical content, even if still retained in Carolingian times, was bound to break apart. To the mature mediaeval mind Jason and Medea were acceptable as long as they were represented as a knight and damsel playing chess in a Gothic chamber, and a classical goddess was acceptable as long as she did service as a Virgin Mary. But a classical Thisbe waiting by a classical mausoleum would have been an archaeological reconstruction incompatible with the sense of continuity; and a Venus classical in form as well as content would have been a diabolical idol anathematized by the aversion to paganism.

This high-mediaeval ambivalence—as opposed to the Carolingian feeling of legitimacy—thus not only sharpened the interest in pagan monuments but also, under certain circumstances, the fear of them. The same Magister Gregorius who studied and measured the Roman antiquities with the detached curiosity of an antiquarian, and not with the acquisitive instinct of a Carolingian copyist, experienced with wonder and uneasiness the "magica quaedam persuasio" of a too beautiful statue of Venus which compelled him to visit it three times although his lodgings were two miles away. It was, in fact, in the "proto-humanistic" 12th Century that there sprang up those truly terrifying legends, revived by Heinrich Heine and Prosper Mérimée, about the young man who put his ring on the finger of a classical Venus and thereby fell prey to the devil.

The "distance" created by the Italian, or main, Renaissance deprived Antiquity of this reality. The classical world ceased to be both a possession and a menace—and became, instead, the object of an everlasting nostalgia. Both the mediaeval renaissances, regardless of the differences between the Carolingian renovatio and the revival movements of the 12th Century, were free from this nostalgia. Antiquity, like the old Lincoln in our homely simile, was still around, so to speak, and its parts could be salvaged or reappropriated whenever necessary. The Italian or main Renaissance came to realize that Antiquity—now "Sacrosancta Vetustas," "hallowed Antiquity"—was a beautiful thing of the past, lost like Milton's paradise but capable of being regained by emulation and reconstruction in toto. Petrarch, the first in whom this new attitude became articulate, inveighs against the "Dark Ages" which separated him, irrevocably, from the clas-
tical past and sees the "dawn" of a new era precisely in such an attempt at total emulation and reconstruction. And by the middle of the 15th Century, when the dawn had come—or was believed to have come—we find the term "medio evo," the "Middle Ages," which explicitly formulates sanctions and sanctions that all-important consciousness of "distance." Both in the 9th and in the 12th Centuries it would have been unthinkable—or, if thinkable, plainly heretical—to divide history into two eras of light separated by one of darkness, and thereby to affix the stigma of obscuration to the advent of Christianity. On the contrary, history was, and had to be, conceived as a continuous development from pagan darkness to Christian light; from the era "before the Law" through the era "under the Law" to the era "under Grace."

In sum, the Italian Renaissance looked upon classical Antiquity from a historical distance; therefore, for the first time, as upon a totality removed from the present; and therefore, for the first time, as upon an ideal to be longed for instead of a reality to be both utilized and feared. The pre-Gothic Middle Ages had left Antiquity unburied, and alternately galvanized and exorcized its body. The Renaissance stood weeping at its grave and tried to resurrect its soul. And in one fatally suspicious moment it succeeded. This is why the medieval concept of Antiquity was so concrete and, at the same time, so incomplete and distorted; whereas the modern one is, in a sense, abstract but more comprehensive and consistent. And this is why the medieval revivals were real but transitory whereas the Italian, or main, Renaissance was, in a sense, academic but permanent.

Resurrected souls are somewhat intangible but they have the advantage of being immortal and omnipresent. Therefore the rôle of classical Antiquity in the modern world is a little elusive but, on the other hand, pervasive—and changeable only with a change in the form of our civilization as such.

In conclusion, let us cast a fleeting glance upon the questions, happily evaded thus far, of relevance and value.

Since Ranke's dictum about the Unmittelbarkeit of every era in relation to God, historians are shy of statements to the effect that one period of history was "better" or "worse" than another. Such statements are indeed extremely tenuous, especially in the absence of a definite frame of reference; even this writer—who, as an art historian, would not hesitate to declare that, by and large, the 9th and 12th Centuries are "better" periods than the 7th or 10th—would be reluctant to contend that Bramante's St. Peter's and Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling were "better" than Reims Cathedral and the stained-glass windows of Chartres. However, to deny that the Italian Renaissance wrought a change for the better is not tantamount to denying that it wrought a change that was relevant. Rather it is the very fundamentality of this change which makes it impossible to evaluate the Modern Era against the Middle Ages in terms of "better" or "worse."

One of the leading anti-Renaissanceists has recently dismissed the relevance of the "rinascimento dell'antichità" by the following simile: "A girl of eighteen, dressed up in the clothes which her grandmother wore when a girl of eighteen, may look more like her grandmother as she was then than her grandmother herself looks now. But she will not feel or act as her grandmother did half a century ago." Taking up this simile, we may answer: If this girl decides to adopt the clothes of her grandmother for good and wears them all the time in the serious conviction that they are more appropriate and becoming than those she used to wear before, this very decision not only indicates but actually presupposes a change in her whole personality and way of life—a change not sufficient to make her a duplicate of her grandmother (which no one has claimed to be true of
the Renaissance period in relation to classical Antiquity), but basic enough to make her “feel and act” quite differently from the way she did as long as she believed in slacks and polo shirts.

However, the Renaissance was not a change of costume but a change of consciousness. From Petrarch on, the world was sure that history had entered a new phase; and, to quote from an instructive essay by T. E. Mumford, “It is precisely this notion of a ‘new time’ which distinguishes the Italian Renaissance from all the so-called earlier ‘Renaissances.’” Here, then, we have at least a “notion,” a novel view men took of themselves and their historical situation, and not a mere masquerade. But for those historians who refuse to consider “intangibles” a “notion” is even less convincing than a change of costume. According to them the fact that the Renaissance believed itself to be a new era does not prove that it was one. The men of the Renaissance, it is argued, simply deluded themselves as well as posterity, and did not even scruple to minimize the accomplishments of their mediaeval forerunners. For—and this is the decisive argument—practically all the attitudes, inventions and discoveries which have been credited to the “new era” already existed during the Middle Ages, except for the fact that in the Renaissance there was a little more of them.

The Renaissance, it has been said, cannot be hailed as a period in which the individual became more autonomous and conscious of himself, for mediaeval artists signed their works on very many occasions. Classical philology and archaeology were nothing new, for Lupus of Ferrières, as we well know, collated manuscripts under Louis the Pious and Magister Gregorius measured the Pantheon about 1200. Awakening of a feeling for nature? Marbot of Rennes wrote a charming poem on his little country place at the beginning of the 12th Century, and Bishops and professors climbed mountains long before Petrarch’s “epoch-making” ascent of Mont Ventoux. Revolution of natural science? Nicole Oresme taught the heliocentric system as early as in the 14th Century; and Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon had telescopes even in the 13th. Now there are certain things which thus far have not been shown to exist in the Middle Ages, and they happen to be precisely those which may well be construed as manifestations of a trend toward individualism on the one hand, and of an increasing interest in a scientific approach to nature on the other: quantitative experimentation in physics; anatomy by actual dissection; a theory of art which was no longer a code of generally accepted rules but a rational discipline equipping the artist for his individual encounter with reality (especially focussed perspective which subjects the picture to a mathematical construction and yet allows the painter to determine the premises of this construction at will); book printing and the techniques of woodcut and engraving by means of which one man could disseminate his ideas or inventions all over the world. But let us assume that even these accomplishments could be shown to have existed in the Middle Ages: what would it prove?

As the difference between the Crusades and the earlier pilgrimages to Jerusalem is not so much a question of numbers as a question of purpose and effect, so the difference between the Modern Era and the Middle Ages is not whether there were more and better telescopes about 1620 than about 1260 but for what purpose and with what effect they were used. And here, indeed, the contrast is enormous. Grosseteste used his, as he informs us himself, to read inscriptions at an unbelievable distance and to count the ears in far-off cornfields. Galileo used his to investigate the universe. In other words, if you hand a telescope to the 13th Century nothing happens at all: if you hand it to the 17th there will ensue a new interpretation of the world which will lead to the idea of the
infinity of interstellar space—whereas Grosseteste wrote a special treatise to prove that the universe was finite—and ultimately endanger the position of God. If you teach the heliocentric system in 1370 nobody cares, not even the Church (Orpens died, unmolested, as Bishop of Lisleux); if you do it two hundred years later you will encounter serious trouble because you will have started a revolution of thought.

Why is it that the same things were effective or, from an ecclesiastical point of view, dangerous in the Renaissance while they were ineffective or harmless in the Middle Ages? Because, pace so many distinguished colleagues, circumstances—and that means, in history, the minds of men—had changed after all. The printing press had made accessible to all what had previously reached only a few. Social problems had assumed a personal and psychological rather than collective and practical character. (A sentence like Dürer’s “Here in Venice I am a gentleman, at home I am a parasite” could not have been written by any mediaeval painter.) In short, the individual had in fact become intensely conscious of his more independent and, for this very reason, more problematic position in relation to God, society and his own self.

This can be demonstrated, not by trying to prove that more and longer pastoral were written in the 16th Century than in the 12th, but by pointing out that Sannazaro’s Arcadia and Tasso’s Aminta are pervaded by a spirit of “sweetly sad” longing for the innocence and bliss of nature which amounts to a negation of all mediæval ideas as to the destination of man (from this point of view Petrarch’s ascent of Mont Ventoux remains a memorable event, not because he was the first to undertake such a venture but because he was the first to be sentimental about it); not by trying to prove that more and sounder information about the classical deities is found in Cyraldus’ Syntagmata than in the "Mythographus III" or in the Gesta regum Anglorum by William of Malmesbury, but by pointing cut that Titian and Shakespeare looked upon Venus neither as an antiquarian curiosity nor as a heathenish demon but as a poetic reality; not by trying to prove that more and greater artists signed their works about 1800 than about 1300—which is not even true because the greatest often felt that the very personality of their style made a signature superfluous—but by pointing out that the artist of the Renaissance, whether signing or not, represented a type of person simply unknown in the Middle Ages.

In the Middle Ages a painter could be a good painter or a bad painter, and he could be a sinner or, in exceptional cases, a saint. But he could not be a “scientist” basing himself, as Leonardo demanded, on mathematics and experiment. And on no account could he be a genius. He was credited with the power to produce, like every human being possessed of reason and a healthy body, but not with the power to “create”; for creation was the prerogative of God. This truly revolutionary idea did not appear until the 15th and 16th Centuries when people began to talk of “inspiration” with reference to the poet and the artist, when Michelangelo (who signed only one work in all his life) was called “divino” and when Dürer asserted that a good painter, creating “every day new shapes of men and creatures the like of which was never seen before nor thought of by any other man.” had an “equality to God.” Psychologically and sociologically the modern artist did not become any happier by this promotion, and it is no accident that the very notion of creative genius was bound up, from its very inception, with the idea of melancholy. But he certainly began to work, to live and to be looked upon in a spirit essentially different from that of the Middle Ages.

A favorite humanistic symbol of the artist was Prometheus, and a favorite humanistic symbol of man in general was, accord-
ingly, Hercules. We all remember the classical story of Hercules at the Crossroads, obliged to make his choice between Virtue and Pleasure (or Vice) and deciding for the former. One wonders why this eminently moral story, though transmitted by such popular and respectable authors as Cicero, was never illustrated or even quoted in the Middle Ages. The answer is: just because it is such an eminently moral story, that is to say, because it places the ideas of good and evil on an entirely human plane. In the Middle Ages there was no Virtue, for that would have meant a kind of perfection within the limits of the terrestrial world. There were only virtues derived from the one Virtue that is Christ, and consequently there was no human being free to make an autonomous decision between Virtue and Vice but only one free to accept or to reject the grace of God—free, not to walk this way or that, but to allow himself to be carried away by either an angel or a devil.

If one wants to perceive, at one glance, the difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance one may compare Sebastian Brant's *Fools' Ship* of 1494 with Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Praise of Folly* of 1512. Brant, without a trace of toleration or irony, inveighs against more than a hundred kinds of human folly, firmly convinced that he is right and that everybody else is wrong. Erasmus also ridicules human folly, but he, the most intelligent man of the century, does this by pretending to speak in the name of Folly herself. Whatever is said must therefore be interpreted as his opinion as well as hers. In one of the chapters Erasmus—or Folly—thus assails, apparently as grimly serious as Brant, the foolishness of old women still going to drinking parties, still using make-up, still hiring gigolos, still removing hair from the strangest places. But what is the conclusion? "Such capers are laughed at by everyone, and with good reason, as being the silliest in the world. Yet the old ladies are satisfied with themselves, and in the mean time they swim in pleasure and anoint themselves all over with honey; they are happy, in a word, by courtesy of me. And as for the people who find it all too ridiculous, I want them to mull over the question whether it is not better to lead this sort of honeyed life in folly than to look for a rafter, as the phrase goes, suitable for a hanging." Folly, then, first attacks foolishness and then defends it. Being Folly, her attack should really mean justification and her defense the opposite. But since she speaks in the name of Erasmus as well as in her own it also works out the other way: the attack may be serious but no less serious would then be the defense—the insight into the fact that "to be engrossed in folly, to err, to be deceived, not to know" is simply "to live as a man."

In an ironical double-twist like this there does appear a humanism—and a humanity utterly foreign to the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages reason could question faith and faith could question reason. But reason could not question itself and yet emerge with wisdom—even though Robert Grosseteste had a telescope.