

The Renaissance



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The influence of Islam on Europe is responsible for the rapid advancement of Europe in the Dark Ages. Briffault in the book "The Making of Humanity" states: "It was not science only which brought Europe back to life.

Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life. The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Arab culture, it owes its existence.

The ancient world was, as we saw, pre-scientific. The astronomy and mathematics of Greeks were a foreign importation never thoroughly acclimatized in Greek culture. The Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized, but the patient ways of investigations, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation and experimental enquiry were altogether alien to the Greek temperament. Only in Hellenistic Alexandria was any approach to scientific work conducted in the ancient classical world. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs."

The Greeks were primarily theorists and contemplators. Plato juxtaposed the macro-world to the micro-world of the human body. Aristotle classified the world we live in into four groups: fire, air, water and earth. According to Durant these "elaborations of 'vague theories' was the extent of the Grecian contribution." Dr. K Ajram in his book, "The Miracle of Islamic Science" says,

Greek interpretations failed to signify science because they did not take actions to confirm their theories.

Hippocrates is known as the father of modern medicine but the majority of his medical theories

were considered erroneous. These achievements during their age were tremendous but the main influence of the Renaissance didn't come solely from the Greeks.

In-depth observation and experiments were introduced to Europe by the Arabs (Muslims, Christians and Jews). The Greek's accomplishments in the field of Reason, Philosophy and Art were vast but the precise sciences; Physics, Medicine, Geology, Geography, Botany, and others all came with the rise of Islam."

In Europe's "Dark Ages," the bond between faith and reason was weak and there developed a deep gulf between them. It was the Muslims who at the peak of their "Golden Age" came to the assistance and bridged this gap.

Many questions raised by the Christian gospel were awaiting rational interpretations. Did God create the universe out of nothing or had that universe existed eternally? The answers were found in the writings of the Arab and Islamic literature. In the 8th through 13th centuries in Spain under the Moors, some of Islam's greatest thinkers, revolutionized Christian scholasticism.

Some of those are al Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Hazm (994-1064) and Ibn Rushd. Ibn Rushd (1126-1196) was known by the Latin as Averroes. Ibn Rushd was a philosopher, an Aristotelian and an author of some of the most influential medical works. He provided Europe with integral commentaries on understanding Aristotle, who was a significant influence in Western scientific development.

Christian thinkers relied more on Ibn Rushd (Averroism) than on Aristotle in researching the world of science. Among Ibn Rushd's followers were the Jewish thinkers who called him "the soul and intelligence of Aristotle." In fact, Jewish philosophers such as Ibn Maymun, known as Maimonides (d. 1204), Yahuda ben Solomo Cohen and Avicebron who were the main glory of intellect, were students of Ibn Rushd and Arabic philosophy. It is the Islamic philosophy that floats high above all racism that gave freedom and protection to minority and the Jews who translated the Arabic works into Hebrew (12th to 14th century).

Rom Landau stated in his book, "The Arab Heritage of Western Civilization" that

"Averroism became the chief doctrine of the philosophical schools of Paris, Padua and Bologna. It helped lay the foundation for the Renaissance."

Another branch of Arab learning was medicine. One of Europe's best medical schools in France was founded by Arab doctors.

Around 1150 AD Europe learned the Arabic numerals, and the science of Algebra, a science invented by the Arabs. The Italian, Leonardo Fibonacci, laid the foundations of Western mathematics basing his approach on that of the Arabs.

It is clear that "what the Arabs transmitted to the West went far beyond the Greek legacy. It was the Arabs from whom Europe also learned that there can be no exclusiveness in man's quest for truth, and that truth itself knows no frontiers of race or religion. These were in fact the principles that were to guide the Renaissance and make Western progress and Western civilization possible," says Rom Landau, author of "The Arab Heritage of Western Civilization."

