

Video 7

What is a Renaissance?

Part Five

Hello. Here we are for **Part Five. What is a Renaissance?**

Let us ask one more Big Question. Perhaps we are too idealistic, but I think that we should ask it anyway, so that we can consider what our answers would be.

As we free ourselves from the ancient evils which have curtailed our progress for so long, what could we do with our freedom?

Let's say that we are at mid-century, in the year 2050. We are no longer fighting wars. We no longer hate each other. We have built a global system which brings clean energy into every home and school and factory around the world. People have jobs, and even flourishing careers, and thus prosperity has replaced poverty and famine. Our political systems have become increasingly democratic. And though we still struggle with the ravages of climate change—the storms and the droughts, the warming of the Arctic, the rising of sea levels—we are at least no longer contributing to the pollution which caused the global warming. That alone is a giant step of progress.

Equally important, we have learned to work together. Whatever challenges we confront, we do so as a team. And as the First Global Generation grows up together, from 16 years old to 26, to 36, that team grows stronger and stronger.

If we look back at the Renaissance of the 1500s, we find a blossoming of architecture. Churches were built using domes and pillars borrowed from the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome. The enormous Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, which took 120 years to build—from 1506 to 1626—is a magnificent example of Renaissance architecture.

Now in the 21st Century, we need to build not only individual buildings but entire cities which are powered by clean energy. Public transportation and bike lanes will greatly reduce traffic on city streets. A multitude of parks, as well as greenery

incorporated into the architecture of most buildings, will bring Mother Nature right into the heart of our cities.

Perhaps we will need an entirely new kind of church, an innovative building which honors the sacredness of life—rare, precious, fragile life—on our planet. Here would be a church where all people, no matter what their cultural and religious background, would be welcome. Pilgrims would enter an edifice filled with the spirit of tolerance and respect toward our fellow humans, and filled as well with harmony with Mother Earth.

During both the Renaissance of the 1500s and the Enlightenment of the 1700s, people thinking in new ways created a blossoming of science and mathematics. Glass lenses were incorporated into two new inventions: the telescope and the microscope. Now scientists like Galileo could search the night sky; he discovered not only the moons of Jupiter but the rings of Saturn. Glass lenses were also incorporated into eyeglasses, so that people could read the growing number of books printed on the printing presses which were spreading—following their invention by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany in 1440—printing presses were spreading all over Europe.

Leonardo da Vinci studied human anatomy by dissecting corpses, so that his paintings of the external human body could be more true to life.

The mechanical clock, with gears and two arms that swept around a face with numbers, was invented during the Renaissance. In 1581, Galileo invented the pendulum with its steady tick-tocking back and forth.

Copernicus, the Polish astronomer and mathematician, developed new fields of mathematics in order to prove that the Earth revolved around the sun.

We could explore the work of many other great thinkers during both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. But our focus today is on the 21st Century, which beckons the Global Generation to cast aside the political idiots—the political idiots—who scorn the science of climate change. We need to carry on the great tradition of *seeking the truth* in our endangered world.

We need marine biologists who study the life in seas and oceans around the world. We need forest biologists, and desert biologists, and mountain biologists, helping us to understand the precious web of life on our planet. We need a new blossoming of science, one which honors not the profits from oil, but the beauty and complexity of life on our unique planet.

During both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, literature blossomed. People wrote about new ways of thinking, in politics, in science, in philosophy. And people wrote stories, about heroes and villains, about great adventures, about love, just like the stories that we read today.

Young people of the world, now in the 21st Century, *your* century, we need books written by veterans and by refugees. We need books written by women who tell the story of their repression, and their battle for an education, a career, and a full, rich, blossoming life.

We need journalists who shine their lights on the evils in our world.

We need filmmakers who take us into countries and cultures which we have never before visited, or understood.

We need playwrights who enable actresses and actors to portray the truth of our times on the stages of the world.

And we need musicians, vibrant musicians from a multitude of cultures, who sing their songs and write their symphonies . . . about Mother Earth, about the steady progress of our Renaissance, about the far better world which we are building.

So you see, we are at the brink of unprecedented climate disasters. We are at the brink of tipping points which we do not even know about, ready to topple us into decades of devastation, perhaps even extinction.

But we are also at the brink of potentially the most exciting epoch in all of human history. And the choice—either . . . or—is in your hands.

You can do it. As a teacher, I have worked with bright, motivated students in classrooms from California to Illinois to New York, on the sunny island of Saint Croix in the Caribbean, for ten years above the Arctic Circle in northern Norway—where I worked with the Sami reindeer people at their College in the heart of the tundra—and at two great universities in Russia, in Saint Petersburg and in Arkhangelsk.

I *believe* in the students who are deeply motivated, who have a vibrant sense of right and wrong, and who want a life filled with purpose and progress.

I have stood with binoculars on a beach at night on a Greek island, searching the dark sea for the tiny rubber boats bringing refugees to what they hope will be the safety and sanctuary of Europe. I have stood in the rain and the mud in Moria refugee camp on Lesbos, an overcrowded camp that is part prison and part swamp, talking with teenagers who have escaped from a war zone—leaving their grandparents behind

—and who now find themselves blocked by closed borders from finding a safe home in Europe.

I *believe* in the young people who have witnessed the evils in our world today. I believe in their hope for the chance to rebuild their lives. I believe in their aching desire for peace.

Let us weave our schools together. Let us reach out to the experts who can guide us. Let us share our research and our pictures and our music.

Let us honor the Creator . . . by honoring the creation.

And then, in the year 2100, at the end of this epic century, let us look back at the unprecedented work which we have done. Which *you* have done. Let us look at the multitude of gifts which we have shared, which *you* have shared, including the gifts which we give to the children of the 22nd Century. Let us look upon each other with enormous gratitude.

And let us say a prayer of gratitude to good old Mother Earth, who helped us every step of the way.

Thank you.

Now let's get to work.

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