**Frederick Douglass Academy**

**Global Studies**

**Mr. Murphy**

**Renaissance Humanism: Primary Document Analysis**

**“Oration on the Dignity of Man”; Pico Della Mirandola**

**Homework #4: Directions:** There are seven numbered excerpts from the Mirandola Document. Each has a central idea that helps to build his overall argument. Your task is to:

1. Consider the “Topic Question” beneath each numbered excerpt, and respond to it.
2. Provide ***one*** quotation from the numbered excerpt that supports your answer. Be sure you write the ***whole*** quotation.

After you have done steps one and two for ***each of the seven excerpts***, provide me with a ***final paragraph*** explaining at least ***two reasons*** why Mirandola’s document is a ***perfect*** definition of Renaissance Humanism, and how Man was beginning to re-define himself.

(1) “All these reasons given for the magnificence of human nature *failed* to convince me: that man is the intermediary (middle point) between creatures, close to the gods, master of all the lower creatures, with the sharpness of his senses, the acuity (clear understanding) of his reason, and the brilliance of his intelligence the interpreter of nature, the nodal (central) point between eternity and time, and, as the Persians say, the intimate bond or marriage song of the world, just a little lower than angels?”

**(#1 Topic: How has man *historically* been portrayed in the Great Chain of Being?)**

(2) “I concede these are magnificent reasons, but they do not seem to go to the *heart of the matter*, that is, those reasons which truly claim admiration. For, if these are all the reasons we can come up with, why should we not admire angels more than we do ourselves? After thinking a long time, I have figured out why man is *the most fortunate of all creatures* and as a result worthy of the highest admiration and earning his rank on the chain of being, a *rank to be envied* not merely by the beasts but by the stars themselves and by the spiritual natures beyond and above this world.”

**(#2 Topic: What has Mirandola “figured out” about Man?)**

(3) “What is this rank on the Chain of Being? God the Father, Supreme Architect of the Universe, built this home, this universe we see all around us…the expanse above the heavens he decorated with Intelligences, the spheres of heaven with living, eternal souls. The scabrous (horrible) and dirty lower worlds he filled with animals of every kind. However, *when the work was finished,* the Great Artisan desired that there be ***some creature*** to think on the plan of his great work, and love its infinite beauty, and stand in awe at its immenseness.”

**(#3 Topic: Describe the structure of the Great Chain of Being)**

(4) “Therefore, when all was finished…he began to think about the *creation of man*…all was perfected, all created things stood in their proper place, the highest things in the highest places, the midmost things in the midmost places, and the lowest things in the lowest places. But God the Father would not fail, exhausted and defeated, in this *last creative act*.”

**(#4 Topic: What was God’s final decision concerning Man?)**

(5) “He made Man a creature of indeterminate (non-specific) and indifferent nature, and, placing him in the middle of the world, said to him "Adam, we give you no fixed place to live, no form that is peculiar to you, nor any function that is yours alone. According to your desires and judgment, you will have and possess whatever place to live, whatever form, and whatever functions you yourself choose.”

**(#5 Topic: How did Man’s “place” in the Universe also reflect and his “nature?)**

(6) “Man, when he entered life, the Father gave the seeds of every kind and every way of life possible. Whatever seeds each man sows and cultivates will grow and bear him their proper fruit. If these seeds are vegetative, he will be like a plant. If these seeds are sensitive, he will be like an animal. If these seeds are intellectual, he will be an angel and the Son of God.”

(#6 Topic: What can be the consequences of “free will”)

(7) “It is not a lack of body that makes an angel an angel, rather it is his spiritual intelligence. If you see a person totally subject to his appetites, crawling miserably on the ground, you are looking at a plant, not a man. If you see a person blinded by empty illusions and images, and made soft by their tender beguilements, completely subject to his senses, you are looking at an animal, not a man.”

**(#7 Topic: How do our actions create who we are?)**

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