

Assignment SES #3

I started by reading the Antique Spectacles website. I have to say that I tend to find scientific development like this fascinating in general. Some things that stood out to me while reading were as follows

- In the western world, spectacles were not solely for the wealthy. They were made inexpensively enough to be useful for a larger segment of the population. I think this is also interesting because this dissemination occurred relatively (only 100 or so years after they were regularly appearing) soon after they came to be.
- Again, this is yet another example of parallel development in the eastern and western worlds. I find it interesting, however that in the eastern world it is mentioned that glasses were used more so as a status symbol than as a tool.
- Also interesting to me was the expansion of eyeglasses from seemingly something more utilitarian into the symbol of “intelligence and nobility” and into something stylish as well as functional

“Who Invented the Telescope”

- It seems, like the discussion of the development of eyeglasses found on the last website, it is difficult to discern exactly who is responsible for the creation of the telescope. Telescope-like devices seem to have exploded all over the place all at about the same time, and in many different locations.
- All of the previous work in eyeglass making was important for and lead into the development of telescopes.

“Galileo’s Geometric and Military Compass”

- More proof of Galileo’s ability to take in the world around him and improve upon it (or completely disprove in some cases!) He seems to be infinitely curious, which I absolutely love.

I feel like the most prevalent theme of these readings is the fact that none of the inventions have just one clear origin. I wonder if this is due to the slower communication over distances, the more fractured nature of the world in general, the fact that there was just so much happening in the world at the time, or (as we discussed in class) the fact that less specialization in specific subjects was needed (a discovery today requires such a level of specialization, that there is a much smaller subset of people who could perhaps be considered capable of this). Or maybe it’s some combination of any or all of the above. Regardless, I find it extremely interesting not only that these things were simultaneously developed, but also the social and political ramifications from these developments.

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