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# **umanesimo, humanismus humanisme**

filosofie dell'umano  
fra rinascimento e contemporaneità

a cura di  
alberto giacomelli e sergio givone

## Abstracts

LUIGI MIRAGLIA

### *Historical Humanism and Its “First Principles”*

This article analyses the fundamental concepts that distinguish every true form of humanism and that have constituted the pillars of the historical humanism. The Latin term *humanitas* had already taken on two joint meanings in antiquity, perhaps through Cicero's work: that of *philanthropy* and that of *paideia*: the study of *humanae litterae* constituted the *cibus humanitatis*, the nourishment of our distinctively human traits and the bulwark against *feritas*, the feral element that dwells within the human frame. These characteristics were represented above all by *ratio* and *oratio*, that is by *lógos* and the sociability that it engenders, which, born from speech, is nourished by *caritas* that stoicism extends to the entire humankind. Today this *synolon* of moral formation and literary studies, which once seemed indissoluble, has disintegrated; the *vir humanissimus* is no longer the apex of literary culture and moral philosophy. That same culture has become no more than a “mass distraction” and no longer plays a central or formative role in society, let alone in the pursuit of virtue—that virtue which, in historical humanism, corresponded to *vivere secundum naturam hominis*: human nature, in its uniqueness with respect to that of other animals, was known to made up of different parts that, in order to be harmonized and brought into balance, first had to engage in a *pugna interior*, a dynamic, not a static process. The inner *concordia* that might be achieved after this struggle mirrored the harmony of the cosmos and its parts on the one hand and the *concordia ordinum* achieved in a well ordered *res publica* on the other. The duty of humanizing oneself more and more arises from the recognition of the privileged nature of man: his *dignitas*. From this perspective, even the economic structure of society should be regulated neither by a “competition” nor according to the ruthless and predatory “law of the strongest”, but rather by a *mutuum auxilium*, a mutual benevolence between the members of a civil body held together by *fides*, a sort of bond that produces a harmony similar to that of symphonic whole.

UMBERTO CURI

*Homo Sum*

During 2019, a few weeks apart, for the Einaudi publishing house, two books appeared, somehow dedicated to the theme of humanism, by a scholar of the ancient world (M. Bettini, *Homo sum. Essere “umani” nel mondo antico*) and of a philosopher (M. Cacciari, *La mente inquieta. Saggio sull’Umanesimo*). Despite the numerous and significant differences in the approach and development of the reasoning, these two texts have again highlighted, with great rigor and marked originality, the decisive notion of humanism. The present contribution can be interpreted as an attempt to resume and further develop the reflection aroused by the two essays cited. Starting from the intrinsic ambivalence of the term *timoria*, as well as from the meaningfulness of the term *plesios*, this essay explores some of the most significant models of *humanitas* through different ways of relating to the other. In particular, an interpretation of Terence’s play *Heautontimoroumenos* and of *The Gospel According to Luke* was provided.

SERGIO GIVONE

*Umanesimo, Humanismus, Humanisme*

According to current and predominant perspectives, “*Humanismus*” in Germany, “*Humanisme*” in France and “*Umanesimo*” in Italy are three different forms of the same phenomenon, i.e. the interpretation of European Humanisme as a kind of epistemological turning point: from a theocentric vision of the human to an anthropocentric one. Moving from the studies of Eugenio Garin and Cesare Vasoli, and accepting the recent contribution by Massimo Cacciari on the problem, the Author takes position against the thesis identifying humanism and anthropocentrism and he affirms that Humanisme, in its philosophical meaning, maintains and develops the idea that human condition and transcendence of being are strictly connected, as Giambattista Vico has demonstrated in his philosophy of language.

MASSIMO DONÀ

*Overlooks from Melancholy*

The essay offers a brief excursus on the concept of “melancholy” through the Centuries and investigates the constitutive form of duplicity, which makes human beings essentially inhabited by the possibility of a double abyss. Man is destined to recognize the call from an absolute otherness which is inside of him, but that he will never succeed in objectifying. Therefore, melancholy is the expression of a paradoxical lack, which induces man to want to possess the “negative”; but, at the same time, it forces him to recognize that every word is said in vain, because it has always reached its goal. The fact is that one always feels guilty, or at least responsible, for the loss of all otherness. But the other one is me, so it is constituted as a “*null-punkt*”, in a question that continues to be a subject of reflection at least to Heidegger and Sartre. The latter, however, calls it anguish conceived as a real experience of nothing. In all these perspectives on melancholy, it is possible to discover the possibility of confronting ourselves with our constant, paradoxical duality.

PAOLO PAGANI

*On the Complexity of the Human Being: The Articulation of the Soul in Plato and Ficino*

Plato's conception of human soul is tridimensional: reason (*loghistikón*), spirit (*thymoeidés*) and appetite (*epithymetikón*). This essay seeks to reconstruct the motivations, the elements and the modalities of this conception, with particular attention to Plato's *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Philebus* and *Timaeus*. It also puts into question the stereotypical reading conceiving Plato as an anthropological dualist and an ethical intellectualist. In addition, the article considers, specifically, the myth of the "winged chariot", which expresses Platonic theory in allegorical terms. Furthermore, the persistent references made to the mathematical language of the Academy, show that – according to Plato – such a language can express in an encoded manner the relations interior to the human soul and the dialectic between good and pleasure that typifies moral experience. Marsilio Ficino, a sharp commentator of the Platonic dialogues (in particular *Phaedrus* and *Philebus*), offers an original reading of the myth of the "winged chariot", introducing it within the framework of a metaphysics of creation, in which there is both a positive understanding of the infinite and the possibility of an otherworldly reconstitution of human body.

GIOVANNI ALBERTI

*Ficino's In Philebum between Ethics and Metaphysics*

Ficino's commentary on *Philebus* focuses on the doctrine of the Good life. Although Ficino wrote this work in mature age, the commentary shows several difficulties due to the differences with other writings. This paper tries to show the affinities between Ficino's *In Parmenidem* and *In Philebum*; subsequently it identifies the guidelines of Ficino's ethics in the commentary to *Philebus*. Lastly, the article analyses the dialectic of the intellect and the will.

CHIARA PASQUALIN

*Socrates as an Example of Humanity: A Comparison between Arendt and Jaspers*

The figure of Socrates, his way of living and thinking, represents a central topic of investigation both for Hannah Arendt and for Karl Jaspers. Proofs of the common interest in Socrates can be found, on the one hand, in a course given by Arendt in 1954 as well as in her later reflections stemming from the report on the Eichmann trial and, on the other hand, in Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews* and in his book published in 1957, *The Great Philosophers*. The aim of this paper is to compare the interpretations of Socrates given by the two Authors and to show their main points of convergence. In particular, the similarities concern the way the two philosophers interpret Socrates' art of dialogue, the essential connection between truth and communication and the discursive nature of thinking. The correspondences between the two readings of Socrates serve to illustrate, in the conclusive remarks, that the philosophers share an analogous understanding of humanity and of the ways of its realization.

ALBERTO GIACOMELLI

*Humanism and Its Monsters. Rebirths and Ruins of the Humanitas between Hieronymus Bosch, Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Mann*

The contribution aims to question the traditional and classicist interpretation of Humanism. Through a brief analysis of the theme of “madness” in the late Medieval and Renaissance eras, it is intended to highlight Humanism as an age of transition and crisis. The “dark” side of this enigmatic phase of the history of Western thought is then investigated through the description of Hieronymus Bosch’s painting.

The painting *Ship of Fools*, in particular, constitutes the most convincing representation of Nordic Humanism and its “monsters”. The critique of traditional Humanism understood as a philological, erudite and rational movement emerges again in the controversy between Nietzsche and Wilamowitz on the approach to Greek antiquity. The final section of the paper is dedicated to the correspondence between Th. Mann and Kerényi, who wonder whether a Humanism-renaissance is possible after the tragic events of Nazism and war.

PIETRO GORI

*Nietzsche, Europe and the Renaissance*

This paper focuses on sections of Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* that deal with Goethe, with the aim of reflecting on the anthropological ideal that Nietzsche outlines in his late period. I give particular attention to the way in which Nietzsche deals with concepts such as “German”, “(good) European”, and “free spirit”, connecting them in a coherent picture. Finally, I argue that the Renaissance plays an important role in Nietzsche’s anthropological project, for it helps to define the spiritual strength that characterizes the healthy type of man whom Nietzsche thought destined to realize his late philosophy.

RICHARD A. COHEN

*Husserl’s Salvific Phenomenology: For a New Humanity*

The article examines the situation of Edmund Husserl’s two lectures defending phenomenology as a new scientific humanism – “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” (1911) and “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man” (1935) – in the context of contemporary fascist politics, then and now. The essay follows three points: first, Husserl diagnoses political crisis as the consequence of an “objectivist” or “positivist” truncation of science; second, proposes this be corrected by a turn to consciousness as absolute source of meaning, i.e., a turn to phenomenology as genuine science; which, finally creates a new form of peaceful humanity dedicated to universal truth. There is also a fourth point regarding Emmanuel Levinas’s corrective to Husserl’s epistemological absolute, namely, the transcending ethical absolute as “ground” of intelligibility, i.e., the greater exigencies of responsibility, of each person for each other (morality) and of each for all others (justice). Thus, political crisis, fed by positivism, requires Husserl’s corrective phenomenology, but the latter, like all intelligibility, is itself oriented by morality and justice.

MARCO GIGANTE

*The “Other” Humanism: Between Heidegger and Grassi*

This essay aims at analyzing the problem of Humanism outlined in Heidegger’s *Brief über den “Humanismus”* and in the work of Grassi *Heidegger e il problema dell’umanesimo*. It serves the double purpose of showing in what way Heidegger’s philosophical interpretation of *Romanitas* is at the origin of his metaphysical understanding of Humanism and how the question of Heideggerian «*Lichtung*» is dealt, in similar terms, in the philological research of Humanism carried out by Grassi. The main objective is to display that both the investigation of Man undertaken by Heidegger and that of Humanism delineated by Grassi are focused on the search for an authentic relationship with the auroral experience of being and consequently on the understanding of the role of language in unveiling the poetic character of Truth.

FRANCESCO CATTANEO

*Rethinking the “Humanity” of Human Beings. A Historical-Conceptual Discussion of Martin Heidegger’s Letter on “Humanism”*

The *Letter on “Humanism”* (1947) played a significant role in the development of Heidegger’s thought and in its reception. This article aims at discussing that famous work in relation to two strongly intertwined dimensions. First of all, a historical perspective. Heidegger’s *Letter on “Humanism”*, as a matter of fact, deals with topics, problems and authors that emerged in connection with the most relevant events of the time, i.e. the rise of totalitarian ideologies and the devastation of war. It is particularly interesting, therefore, to outline the genesis of this work. The article also deals with a conceptual perspective. After a rather long period of almost complete silence (as far as printed works are concerned), through the *Letter on “Humanism”* Heidegger seeks to explain why his idea of *Dasein* has nothing to do with existentialism (Sartre) and philosophy of existence. Discussing the relationship between *Dasein* and *Sein* he brings to surface the transition from the way in which the question of being is developed in *Being and Time* to the way in which it is developed in his later thought.

MARIO VERGANI

*A Key to the Humanism of Levinas: Prayer*

Levinas’s humanism presents itself as humanism of the other. The essay aims at demonstrate in which way both Jewish sources and phenomenological approach allow to develop this theoretical construct, which is at the same time critical towards Western humanism and willing not to abdicate to the philosophical necessity to investigate the humanity of the human. Levinas’ research about the prayer – both under the phenomenological profile and in its cultural references to the Hebrew Bible and Talmud – is a key to understand in depth the meaning of Levinasian humanism.