

European Humanism and Its Challenges (An Introduction)

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The question of a human person, which is the starting point of every humanism, is the initial, fundamental, almost inevitable question of every culture. On the other hand, it is highly complex and practically impossible to delimit. If one sees humanistic thought as philosophical anthropology, its character is understandably transcultural, one that can appear anywhere in history, and is always radical: it reaches the very foundations of culture and civilization. In this sense, it can be seen as a universal human phenomenon. In its narrower sense, the origins of humanism are marked by the return of Western Europe to the forgotten sources of its cultural identity, hidden in classical antiquity. Moreover, its peak, the Renaissance, is defined by its artistic achievements, which are nevertheless founded in the sphere of intellect and in its new understanding of being human. In this perspective, humanism is one of the most significant and complex phenomena in European cultural history. It is difficult to imagine any research project ignoring its variety.

This is the topic to which this particular thematic issue is primarily dedicated. Both established as well as younger European scholars explore different literary, philosophical, ethical, aesthetic, religious, cultural and social aspects of humanism. Most of the studies highlight its historical dimension: humanism was grounded in ancient literature and thought, and has shaped the conceptual framework of reception and interpretation of antiquity for centuries (Weiss, Kersten, Movrin, and Senegačnik). At the same time, its cognitive and ethical dynamics developed and upgraded its traditions, and thus directed the flow of European culture and, in some respects, even transformed the foundations of its civilization. However, humanism was not shaped exclusively by its relation to antiquity: a valuable source, as well as contrast to its anthropology, was medieval Christian anthropology, mainly as reflected in its supreme expression, Dante's poetry (Širca). In the following chapters, history is analysed from several perspectives: on the one hand, there are investigations of conceptual movements in the understanding of the world, time and human being, which have expanded

the general, “global” horizon of humanistic thinkers (Szönyi, Molnár, Łukaszyk). On the other hand, there is research exploring national and regional luminaries (Marinčič on the influence of P. P. Vergerius on P. Trubar, Pobežin on P. P. Vergerius, and Hriberšek on Ž. Herberstein) and literary phenomena. These studies frequently redefine the established literary and historical image of the humanist period.

The second thematic area of this volume is devoted to the challenges of humanism. To the influence of its central ideas on contemporary culture, particularly on literature (Kuret); to cognitive, ethical, and social dilemmas arising from the conflict of humanistic anthropology and the new patterns in understanding the human condition; and finally to the possibilities opened up by the fresh readings of the humanist tradition. The studies of this volume offer several original insights and new perspectives on the cultural issues of the present time, with contributions that analyze the fundamental experience of humanity in the horizon of humanistic self-understanding (Russo). With globalization as well as with the revolution in media and communication, humanistic culture faces radical changes, which require new reflections regarding the concept of individual disciplines (Zabel).