

Humanism

A term freely applied to a variety of beliefs, methods, and philosophies that place central emphasis on the human realm. Most frequently, however, the term is used with reference to a system of education and mode of inquiry that developed in northern Italy during the 14th century and later spread through Europe and England. Alternately known as "Renaissance humanism," this program was so broadly and profoundly influential that it is one of the chief reasons why the Renaissance is viewed as a distinct historical period. Indeed, though the word *Renaissance* is of more recent coinage, the fundamental idea of that period as one of renewal and reawakening is humanistic in origin. But humanism sought its own philosophical bases in far earlier times and, moreover, continued to exert some of its power long after the end of the Renaissance.

Origin and meaning of the term humanism

The ideal of *humanitas*: The history of the term *humanism* is complex but enlightening. It was first employed (as *humanismus*) by 19th-century German scholars to designate the Renaissance emphasis on classical studies in education. These studies were pursued and endorsed by educators known, as early as the late 15th century, as *umanisti*: that is, professors or students of classical literature. The word *umanisti* derives from the *studia humanitatis*, a course of classical studies that, in the early 15th century, consisted of grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy. The *studia humanitatis* were held to be the equivalent of the Greek *paideia*. Their name was itself based on the Latin *humanitas*, an educational and political ideal that was the intellectual basis of the entire movement. Renaissance humanism in all its forms defined itself in its straining toward this ideal. No discussion, therefore, of humanism can have validity without an understanding of *humanitas*. *Humanitas* meant the development of human virtue, in all its forms, to its fullest extent. The term thus implied not only such qualities as are

associated with the modern word *humanity*—understanding, benevolence, compassion, mercy—but also such more aggressive characteristics as fortitude, judgment, prudence, eloquence, and even love of honour. Consequently the possessor of *humanitas* could not be merely a sedentary and isolated philosopher or man of letters but was of necessity a participant in active life. Just as action without insight was held to be aimless and barbaric, insight without action was rejected as barren and imperfect. *Humanitas* called for a fine balance of action and contemplation, a balance born not of compromise but of complementarity. The goal of such fulfilled and balanced virtue was political in the broadest sense of the word. The purview of Renaissance humanism included not only the education of the young but also the guidance of adults (including rulers) via philosophical poetry and strategic rhetoric. It included not only realistic social criticism but also utopian hypotheses, not only painstaking reassessments of history but also bold reshaping of the future. In short, humanism called for the comprehensive reform of culture, the transfiguration of what humanists termed the passive and ignorant society of the "dark" ages into a new order that would reflect and encourage the grandest human potentialities. Humanism had an evangelical dimension. It sought to project *humanitas* from the individual into the state at large.

The wellspring of *humanitas* was classical literature. Greek and Roman thought, available in a flood of rediscovered or newly translated manuscripts, provided humanism with much of its basic structure and method. For Renaissance humanists, there was nothing dated or outworn about the writings of Plato, Cicero, or Livy. Compared with the typical productions of medieval Christianity, these pagan works had a fresh, radical, almost avant-garde tonality. Indeed, recovering the classics was to humanism tantamount to recovering reality. Classical philosophy, rhetoric, and history were seen as models of proper method—efforts to come to terms, systematically and without preconceptions of any kind, with perceived experience. Moreover,

classical thought considered ethics qua ethics, politics qua politics: it lacked the inhibiting dualism occasioned in medieval thought by the often conflicting demands of secularism and Christian spirituality. Classical virtue, in examples of which the literature abounded, was not an abstract essence but a quality that could be tested in the forum or on the battlefield. Finally, classical literature was rich in eloquence. In particular (since humanists were normally better at Latin than they were at Greek) Cicero was considered to be the pattern of refined and copious discourse. In eloquence humanists found far more than an exclusively aesthetic quality. As an effective means of moving leaders or fellow citizens toward one political course or another, eloquence was akin to pure power. Humanists cultivated rhetoric, consequently, as the medium through which all other virtues could be communicated and fulfilled.

Humanism, then, may be accurately defined as that Renaissance movement which had as its central focus the ideal of *humanitas*. The narrower definition of the Italian term *umanisti* notwithstanding, all the Renaissance writers who cultivated *humanitas*, and all their direct "descendants," may be correctly termed humanists.

Other uses: It is small wonder that a term as broadly allusive as *humanism* should be subject to a wide variety of applications. Of these (excepting the historical movement described above) there are three basic types: humanism as classicism, humanism as referring to the modern concept of the humanities, and humanism as human-centredness.

Accepting the notion that Renaissance humanism was simply a return to the classics, some historians and philologists have reasoned that classical revivals occurring anywhere in history should be called humanistic. St. Augustine, Alcuin, and the scholars of 12th-century Chartres have thus been referred to as humanists. In this sense the term can also be used self-consciously,

as in the New Humanism movement in literary criticism led by Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More in the early 20th century.

The word *humanities*, which like the word *umanisti* derived from the Latin *studia humanitatis*, is often used to designate the nonscientific scholarly disciplines: language, literature, rhetoric, philosophy, art history, and so forth. Thus it is customary to refer to scholars in these fields as humanists and to their activities as humanistic. Humanism and related terms are frequently applied to modern doctrines and techniques that are based on the centrality of human experience. In the 20th century the pragmatic humanism of Ferdinand C.S. Schiller, the Christian humanism of Jacques Maritain, and the movement known as secular humanism, though differing from each other significantly in content, all show this anthropocentric emphasis.

Not only is such a large assortment of definitions confusing, but the definitions themselves are often redundant or impertinent. There is no reason to call all classical revivals humanistic when the word classical suffices. To say that professors in the many disciplines known as the humanities are humanists is to compound vagueness with vagueness, for these disciplines have long since ceased to have or even aspire to a common rationale. The definition of humanism as anthropocentricity or human-centredness has a firmer claim to correctness. For obvious reasons, however, it is confusing to apply this word to classical literature.

Basic principles and attitudes: Underlying the early expressions of humanism were principles and attitudes that gave the movement a unique character and would shape its future development.

Classicism: Early humanists returned to the classics less with nostalgia or awe than with a sense of deep familiarity, an impression of having been brought newly into contact with expressions of an intrinsic and permanent human reality. Petrarch, the acknowledged founder of the

humanistic movement, dramatized his feeling of intimacy with the classics by writing "letters" to Cicero and Livy. Coluccio Salutati remarked with pleasure that possession of a copy of Cicero's letters would make it possible for him to talk with Cicero. Niccolò Machiavelli would later immortalize this experience in a letter that described his own reading habits in ritualistic terms:

Evenings I return home and enter my study; and at its entrance I take off my everyday clothes, full of mud and dust, and don royal and courtly garments; decorously reattired, I enter into the ancient sessions of ancient men. Received amicably by them, I partake of such food as is mine only and for which I was born. There, without shame, I speak with them and ask them about the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity respond to me.

Machiavelli's term *umanità* ("humanity") means more than kindness; it is a direct translation of the Latin *humanitas*. Machiavelli implies that he shared with the ancients a sovereign wisdom of human affairs. He also describes that theory of reading as an active and even aggressive pursuit that was common among humanists. Possessing a text and understanding its words were not enough; analytic ability and a questioning attitude were necessary before a reader could truly enter the councils of the great. These councils, moreover, were not merely serious and ennobling; they held secrets available only to the astute, secrets the knowledge of which could transform life from a chaotic miscellany into a crucially heroic experience. Classical thought offered insight into the heart of things. In addition, the classics suggested methods by which, once known, human reality could be transformed from an accident of history into an artifact of will. Antiquity was rich in examples, actual or poetic, of epic action, victorious eloquence, and applied understanding. Carefully studied and well employed, classical rhetoric could implement enlightened policy, while classical poetics could carry enlightenment into the very souls of men. In a manner that might seem paradoxical to more modern minds,

humanists associated classicism with the future.

Realism: Early humanists shared in large part a realism that rejected traditional assumptions and aimed instead at the objective analysis of perceived experience. To humanism is owed the rise of modern social science, which emerged not as an academic discipline but rather as a practical instrument of social self-inquiry. Humanists avidly read history, taught it to their young, and, perhaps most importantly, wrote it themselves. They were confident that proper historical method, by extending across time their grasp of human reality, would enhance their active role in the present. For Machiavelli, who avowed to treat of men as they were and not as they ought to be, history would become the basis of a new political science. Similarly, direct experience took precedence over traditional wisdom. Leon Battista Alberti's dictum that an essential form of wisdom could be found only "at the public marketplace, in the theatre, and in people's homes" would be echoed by Francesco Guicciardini:

I, for my part, know no greater pleasure than listening to an old man of uncommon prudence speaking of public and political matters that he has not learnt from books of philosophers but from experience and action; for the latter are the only genuine methods of learning anything.

Renaissance realism also involved the unblinking examination of human uncertainty, folly, and immorality. Petrarch's honest investigation of his own doubts and mixed motives is born of the same impulse that led Giovanni Boccaccio in the *Decameron* to conduct an encyclopaedic survey of human vices and disorders. Similarly critical treatments of society from a humanistic perspective would be produced later by Erasmus, More, Castiglione, Rabelais, and Montaigne. But it was typical of humanism that this moral criticism did not, conversely, postulate an ideal of absolute purity. Humanists asserted the dignity of normal earthly activities and even endorsed the pursuit of fame and the acquisition of wealth. The emphasis on a mature and healthy balance between mind and body, first implicit in Boccaccio, is evident in the work of Giannozzo Manetti, Francesco Filelfo,

and Paracelsus; it is embodied eloquently in Montaigne's final essay, "Of Experience." Humanistic tradition, rather than revolutionary inspiration, would lead Francis Bacon to assert in the early 17th century that the passions should become objects of systematic investigation. The realism of the humanists was, finally, brought to bear on the Roman Catholic Church, which they called into question not as a theological structure but as a political institution. Here as elsewhere, however, the intention was neither radical nor destructive. Humanism did not aim to remake humanity but rather to reform social order through an understanding of what was basically and inalienably human.

Critical scrutiny and concern with detail:

Humanistic realism bespoke a comprehensively critical attitude. Indeed, the productions of early humanism constituted a manifesto of independence, at least in the secular world, from all preconceptions and all inherited programs. The same critical self-reliance shown by Coluccio Salutati in his textual emendations and Boccaccio in his interpretations of myth was evident in almost the whole range of humanistic endeavour. It was cognate with a new specificity, a profound concern with the precise details of perceived phenomena, that took hold across the arts and the literary and historical disciplines and would have profound effects on the rise of modern science. The increasing prominence of mathematics as an artistic principle and academic discipline was a testament to this development.

The emergence of the individual and the idea of the dignity of man:

These attitudes took shape in concord with a sense of personal autonomy that first was evident in Petrarch and later came to characterize humanism as a whole. An intelligence capable of critical scrutiny and self-inquiry was by definition a free intelligence; the intellectual virtue that could analyze experience was an integral part of that more extensive virtue that could, according to many humanists, go far in conquering fortune. The emergence of Renaissance individualism was not without its darker aspects. Petrarch and Alberti were alert to

the sense of estrangement that accompanies intellectual and moral autonomy, while Machiavelli would depict, in *The Prince*, a grim world in which the individual must exploit the weakness of the crowd or fall victim to its indignities. But happy or sad, the experience of the individual had taken on a heroic tone. Parallel with individualism arose, as a favourite humanistic theme, the idea of the dignity of man. Backed by medieval sources but more sweeping and insistent in their approach, spokesmen such as Petrarch, Manetti, Valla, and Ficino asserted man's earthly preeminence and unique potentialities. In his noted *De hominis dignitate oratio* ("Oration on the Dignity of Man"), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola conveyed this notion with unprecedented vigour. Humanity, Pico asserted, had been assigned no fixed character or limit by God but instead was free to seek its own level and create its own future. No dignity, not even divinity itself, was forbidden to human aspiration. Pico's radical affirmation of human capacity shows the influence of Ficino's recent translations of the Hermetic writings. Together with the even bolder 16th-century formulations of this position by Paracelsus and Giordano Bruno, the *Oratio* betrays a rejection of the early humanists' emphasis on balance and moderation; it suggests the straining toward absolutes that would characterize major elements of later humanism.

Active virtue: The emphasis on virtuous action as the goal of learning was a founding principle of humanism and (though sometimes sharply challenged) continued to exert a strong influence throughout the course of the movement. Salutati, the learned chancellor of Florence whose words could batter cities, represented in word and deed the humanistic ideal of an armed wisdom: that combination of philosophical understanding and powerful rhetoric which alone could effect virtuous policy and reconcile the rival claims of action and contemplation. In *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus studiis* ("On the Manners of a Gentleman and Liberal Studies"), a treatise that influenced Guarino Veronese and Vittorino da Feltre, Pietro Paolo Vergerio maintained that just

and beneficent action was the purpose of humanistic education; his words were echoed by Alberti in *Della famiglia* ("On the Family"):

As I have said, happiness cannot be gained without good works and just and righteous deeds. . . . The best works are those that benefit many people. Those are most virtuous, perhaps, that cannot be pursued without strength and nobility. We must give ourselves to manly effort, then, and follow the noblest pursuits.

Matteo Palmieri wrote that

the true merit of virtue lies in effective action, and effective action is impossible without the faculties that are necessary for it. He who has nothing to give cannot be generous. And he who loves solitude can be neither just, nor strong, nor experienced in those things that are of importance in government and in the affairs of the majority.

Palmieri's philosophical poem, *La città di vita* ("The City of Life"), developed the idea that the world was divinely ordained to test human virtue in action. Later humanism would broaden and diversify the theme of active virtue. Machiavelli saw action not only as the goal of virtue but also (via historical understanding of great deeds of the past) as the basis for wisdom. Baldassare Castiglione, in his highly influential *Libro del cortegiano* (*Book of the Courtier*), developed in his ideal courtier a psychological model for active virtue, stressing moral awareness as a key element in just action. François Rabelais used the idea of active virtue as the basis for anticlerical satire. In his profusely humanistic *Gargantua*, he has the active hero Friar John save a monastery from enemy attack, while the monks sit uselessly in the church choir, chanting meaningless Latin syllables. John later asserts that, had he been present, he would have used his manly strength to save Jesus from crucifixion, and he castigates the Apostles for betraying Christ "after a good meal." Endorsements of active virtue, as will be shown, would also characterize the work of English humanists from Sir Thomas Elyot to John Milton. They typify the sense of social responsibility, the instinctive association of learning with politics and morality, that stood at

the heart of the movement. As Salutati put it, "One must stand in the line of battle, engage in close combat, struggle for justice, for truth, for honour."

Early history: The influence of Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304–74) was profound and many-sided. As the most prominent man of letters of the 14th century, he promoted the recovery and transcription of classical texts, providing the impetus for the important classical researches of Boccaccio and Salutati. He threw himself into controversies in which he defined a new humanism in contradistinction to what he considered to be the barbaric influence of medieval tradition. He carried on an energetic correspondence that established him as a cultural focal point and would provide, if all his other works were lost, an accurate index of his views and their development. As a theologian (he was an ordained priest) he advanced the view, held by many humanists to follow, that classical learning and Christian spirituality were not only compatible but also mutually fulfilling. As a political apologist, he gave hearty support to Cola di Rienzo's brief revival of the Roman Republic (1347). As a poet, he was the first Renaissance writer to produce a Latin epic (*Africa*), but he was even more important for his compositions in the vernacular. His *Canzoniere* provided the model on which the Renaissance lyric was to take shape and the standard by which future productions would be judged. His work established secular poetry as a serious and noble pursuit. His eloquent and forceful presence made him a personal symbol of his own ideas. Crowned with laurel, favoured by rulers, legates, and scholars, he became the human focus for the new interest in classical revival and literary artistry.

It was, however, as a philosophical spokesman that Petrarch exerted his greatest influence on the history of humanism. In his prose works and letters he established many of the positions that would be central to the movement and broached many of the issues that would be its favourite subjects for debate. His idea of the poet as a philosophical teacher and thus as a champion of

culture would inspire humanists from Boccaccio to Sidney. His endorsement of the study of rhetoric and his underlying notion of language as an informing principle of the individual and society would become crucial subjects of humanistic discussion and debate. His view of classical culture, not as an undifferentiated element of the past but as an authentic alternative to his own medieval society, was of equal historical importance. Petrarch broke with the past and helped to reestablish the Socratic tradition in Europe by specifying self-knowledge as a primary goal of philosophy. This attitude and his unfailing insistence on moral autonomy were early and important signs of the individualism that would become a Renaissance hallmark. He emphasized human virtue as opposed to fortune, thus setting the stage for numerous famous treatments of this theme. He struggled repeatedly with the dilemma of action versus contemplation, establishing it as a favourite topic for humanistic debate. Petrarch did not invent these subjects, nor does he usually treat them with overwhelming power. His preeminence lies in the fact that he was the first writer since antiquity to assert that they and other human matters were valid issues for philosophical inquiry in and of themselves, and in the energy and eloquence with which he made his work their forum.

Petrarch's influence was immediately apparent in the work of two major Florentine humanists, Giovanni Boccaccio and Coluccio Salutati. A close friend and devoted supporter of Petrarch, Boccaccio (1313–75) not only enlarged upon his preceptor's ideas but also made important humanistic contributions of his own. His *Teseide* was the first classical epic to have been written in the vernacular and influenced the more famous Italian epics of Ariosto and Tasso. His *De genealogia deorum gentilium* ("On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles"), a scholarly interpretive compendium of classical myth, was the first in a long line of Renaissance mythographies; it includes a celebrated defense of poetry as a medium of hidden truth, a stimulant to virtue, and a source of mental health. His most memorable contribution to humanism, however,

was probably the famous *Decameron*. Ostensibly this work is no more than a collection of 100 tales about love. But subjected to the interpretive scrutiny that Boccaccio himself recommends in *De genealogia deorum gentilium*, the *Decameron* takes on a far more serious tone. The opening phrase "*Umana cosa è*" ("It is a human thing") is deeply thematic, reminding us that the author structured his work on Dante's spiritual epic, *La divina commedia*. A close reading of the *Decameron* suggests that in it Boccaccio is trying to establish for the human realm the same sort of comprehensive understanding that Dante established for the life of the spirit. Through moral fable and direct address to the reader, he undertakes a reinterpretation of human experience based not on traditional doctrine but rather on perceived reality. Appealing repeatedly to reason and nature, and constantly implying the superiority of awareness to innocence (which he equates with ignorance), he calls for a moral order built fairly and solidly on the potentialities of human nature. His 10 storytellers, who leave the plague-ravaged and chaotic city of Florence and reestablish themselves at a delightfully landscaped villa, suggest the remaking of culture through disentanglement with the past, unprejudiced analysis, and enlightened imagination. Rightly considered to be the wellspring of Western realism, the *Decameron* is also a monument to humanism. Though it makes little mention of classical thought, Boccaccio's great work rings with a tone that was even more basic to the humanistic movement: an emphasis on the human capacity for self-knowledge and willed renewal.

Other humanistic elements implicit in Petrarch's thought were developed in the life and work of Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406). Like Petrarch, Salutati collected manuscripts, wrote on morality and politics, and carried on a voluminous correspondence. He was an aggressive and scientific philologist, instrumental in establishing principles of textual criticism that would become key elements of the humanistic method. He was a forceful apologist for the active life, and his theories bore fruit in his own career as chancellor

of the Florentine republic. His use of classical eloquence in the service of his state was an early documentation of the humanistic faith in the political power of rhetoric; it led a bitter enemy, Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan, to say that a thousand Florentine horsemen had hurt him less than the letters of Coluccio. Salutati was succeeded in the Florentine chancellorship by two scholar-statesmen who reflected his influence, first Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444) and then Gian Francesco Poggio Braccioloni (1380–1459). Bruni was a pioneer in the advocacy of humanistic education, holding that the *studia humanitatis* shape the perfected man and that the goal of this perfected virtue is political action. His theory of education stressed the importance of practical experience (implicit in the work of Boccaccio) and put heavy emphasis on historical studies. His history of Florence is considered to be the first work of modern historiography; and, under the influence of Emmanuel Chrysoloras (1368–1415), a Byzantine teacher who had lectured at Florence and Pavia, he produced Latin translations of Plato and Aristotle that broke with medieval tradition by reproducing the sense of the Greek prose rather than following it word by word. Poggio, the foremost recoverer of classical texts, was also a moralist, a historian, a brilliant correspondent, and an early scholar of architectural antiquities. His long career, which included service to both church and state and friendships with Salutati, Bruni, Niccolò Niccoli, Guarino, Nicholas of Cusa, Donatello, and Cosimo de' Medici, exemplifies the scope and vitality of Italian humanism. Together these Florentine chancellors, whose active lives spanned almost a century, strengthened and consolidated the humanistic program. Moreover, their leadership strongly influenced the cultural developments that would make 15th-century Florence the most active intellectual and artistic centre in Europe.

As one proceeds with the history of humanism, the following major points about its development in the 14th century ought to be kept in mind. Humanism received its crucial imprint from the work of a single man and thence developed among men who maintained close touch with

each other and acknowledged a shared mission. Humanism was not originally an academic movement but rather a program defined and promoted by statesmen and men of letters. Its proclaimed goal was widespread cultural renewal; therefore, it chose its subjects for consideration from the phenomena of human life as lived and adopted the Ciceronian model of philosopher as citizen in preference to the contemplative ideal. The heavy emphasis on civic action is connected with the fact that humanism developed in a republic rather than a monarchy. By the turn of the 15th century, all of the key elements that came to define humanism were in place except for two: its detailed educational system and what might be called its Greek dimension. The founders of the first humanistic schools were Vittorino da Feltre (1373–1446) and Guarino Veronese (Guarino da Verona, 1374–1460). Vittorino and Guarino were fellow students at the University of Padua at the turn of the century; they are said later to have tutored each other (Guarino as an expert in Greek, Vittorino in Latin) after Guarino had opened the first humanistic school (Venice, c. 1414). Vittorino taught in both Padua (where he was briefly professor of rhetoric) and Venice during the early 1420s. In 1423 he accepted the invitation of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, marquis of Mantua, to become tutor to the ruling family. At this post Vittorino spent the remaining 22 years of his life. His school, held in a delightful palace that he renamed “La Giocosa,” had as its students not only the Gonzaga children (among them the future marquis, Ludovico) but also an increasing number of others, including sons of Poggio, Guarino, and Filelfo. The eminent humanist Lorenzo Valla studied there, as did Federico da Montefeltro, who later promoted humanistic institutions as duke of Urbino. Vittorino's school in Mantua was the first to focus the full power of the humanistic program, together with its implications in other arts and sciences, upon the education of the young. Latin literature, Latin composition, and Greek literature were required subjects of study. Heavy emphasis was placed on Roman history as an educational treasury of great men and memorable deeds. Rhetoric (as taught by

Quintilian) was a central topic, not as an end in itself but as an effective means of channeling moral virtue into political action. Vittorino summed up the essentially political thrust of humanistic education as follows:

Not everyone is called to be a physician, a lawyer, a philosopher, to live in the public eye, nor has everyone outstanding gifts of natural capacity, but all of us are created for the life of social duty, all are responsible for the personal influence that goes forth from us.

Other studies at Mantua included music, drawing, astronomy, and mathematics. The meadows around La Giocosa were turned into playing fields. Vittorino's educational policy spoke at once to mind and body, to aesthetic enjoyment and moral virtue. His work embodied a more comprehensive appeal to human perfectibility than had been attempted since antiquity. Humanists were not unaware of the originality and ambitiousness of this project. With reference to a similar program of his own, Guarino's son Battista remarked that "no branch of knowledge embraces so wide a range of subjects as that learning that I have now attempted to describe."

Guarino had learned his Greek in Constantinople under the influence of Chrysoloras, whose dynamic presence had done much to foster Greek studies in Italy. During the course of the 15th century, which saw the famous council of Eastern and Western churches (Ferrara–Florence, 1438–45) and later the fall of Constantinople to the Turks (1453), Italy received as welcome immigrants a number of other eminent Byzantine scholars. George Gemistus Plethon (1355–1450) was a major force in Cosimo de' Medici's foundation of the Platonic Academy of Florence. George of Trebizond (Georgius Trapezuntius, 1395–1484), a student of Vittorino, was a formidable bilingual stylist who wrote important handbooks on logic and rhetoric. Theodore Gaza (c. 1400–75) and Johannes Argyropoulos (1410–90) contributed major translations of Aristotle. John (originally Basil) Bessarion (1403–72), who became a cardinal in 1439, explored theology from a Platonic

perspective and sought to resolve apparent conflicts between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy; his large collection of Greek manuscripts, donated to the Venetian senate, became the core of the notable library of St. Mark. This infusion of Byzantine scholarship had a profound effect on Italian humanism. By making Greek texts and commentaries available to Western students, and by acquainting them with Byzantine methods of criticism and interpretation, the teachers from Constantinople enabled Italian humanists to explore the bases of classical thought and to appreciate its greatest monuments, either in the original or in accurate new Latin translations.

The 15th century: As Italian humanism grew in influence during the 15th century, it developed ramifications that connected it with every major field of intellectual and artistic activity. Moreover, the advent of printing at mid-century and the contemporaneous upsurge of publication in the vernacular brought new sectors of society under humanistic influence. These and other cultural impetuses hastened the export of humanistic ideas to the Low Countries, France, England, and Spain, where significant humanistic programs would be in place by the early 16th century. Even as these things were happening, however, other changes were deeply and permanently affecting the character of the movement. The concerns of many major humanists were narrowed by inevitable historical processes of specialization, to the extent that, in a large number of cases, humanism lost its comprehensive thrust and became a predominantly academic or literary pursuit. The political élan of humanism was weakened by the decline of republican institutions in Florence. Ambiguities and paradoxes implicit in the original program developed into open conflicts, dividing the movement into camps and depleting much of its original integrity. But before considering these developments, one might do well to appreciate three 15th-century examples of humanism at its height: the career of Leon Battista Alberti and the humanistic courts at Florence and Urbino.

Leon Battista Alberti: The achievement of Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) testifies to the formative power and exhaustive scope of earlier Italian humanism. He owed his boyhood education to Gasparino da Barzizza (1359–1431), the noted teacher who, with Vergerio, was influential in the development of humanism at Padua. Alberti attended the University of Bologna from 1421 until 1428, by which time he was expert in law and mathematics and so adept at humanistic literary skills that his comedy *Philodoxeos* was accepted as the newly discovered work of an ancient author. In 1428 he became secretary to Cardinal Albergati, bishop of Bologna, and in 1432 he accepted a similar position in the papal chancery at Rome. His service to the church soon brought him incomes that permanently secured his livelihood, and he spent the remainder of his life at a variety of literary, philosophical, and artistic pursuits so dazzling as to challenge belief. He was a poet, essayist, and biographer. His moral and philosophical works, especially *Della famiglia*, *De iciarchia* (“On the Man of Excellence and Ruler of His Family”), and *Momus*, are humanistic statements that nonetheless bear the mark of a unique individual. He wrote a rhetorical handbook and a grammatical treatise, the *Regule lingue Florentine*, which bespeaks his strong influence on the rise of literary expression in the vernacular. He contributed an important text on cartography and was instrumental in the development of ciphers. A prominent architect (e.g., the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini and the facade of Sta. Maria Novella in Florence), he was also an eminent student of all artistic ideas and practices. His three studies—*De pictura* (*On Painting*), *De statua* (*On Sculpture*), and *De re aedificatoria* (*Ten Books on Architecture*)—were landmarks in art theory, powerful in developing the theory of perspective and the idea of “human” space. His theoretical and practical reliance on mathematics (which he considered to be the basic, unifying element of all science) is rightly seen as an important step in the early development of modern method.

Behind these achievements was a man of startling physical prowess and inexhaustible sanguinity.

He said outright that an individual could encompass whatever project he truly willed, and his own life bore witness to this radical thesis. In the 19th century Jacob Burckhardt would write of him as a “universal man” of the Renaissance, while his own contemporary Politian described him with wonderment: “It is better to be silent about him than not to say enough.” Alberti's theory and practice bore an undeniably humanistic stamp. His passion for mathematics was in all likelihood an outgrowth of the educational program at Padua (Vittorino, himself an avid mathematician, was also a student of Barzizza). His omnivorous pursuit of knowledge recalls Barzizza's conviction that *humanitas* was the unifying principle of many arts. An advocate of classical erudition in art and architecture as well as in literary activity, he extended into his artistic studies the same sense of precision and specificity that earlier humanists had applied to philology. His sense of human dignity, evident in all his productions, was supported and indeed justified by a strenuous realism. His advocacy of the vernacular disturbed a number of more doctrinaire humanists, who favoured total Latinity. But this predisposition, rather than a divergence from humanistic principle, was a direct outgrowth of its evangelistic thrust. In short, Alberti uniquely fulfilled the humanistic aspiration for a learning that would comprehend all experience and a philosophical heroism that would renew society.

The Medici and Federico da Montefeltro: The 15th century saw the rise of the Platonic Academy of Florence and the great humanistic courts. Close ties between Poggio and the Medici helped make that ruling family of Florence the new custodians of the humanistic heritage. Cosimo de' Medici (Cosimo the Elder, 1389–1464), who had personally lured the great council of churches from Ferrara to Florence in 1439, became so enamoured of Greek learning that, at the suggestion of Gemistus Plethon, he decided to found a Platonic academy of his own. He amassed a great collection of books, which would form the nucleus of the Laurentian Library. He generously supported the work of scholars, in particular

encouraging the brilliant Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) to undertake a complete Latin translation of Plato. Other notable members of the academy were Politian, Cristoforo Landino (1424–1504), and Ficino's own student, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94). The Medici family was equally notable in its patronage of the arts, supporting projects by a list of masters that included Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, and Cellini. Cosimo's famous grandson Lorenzo (Lorenzo the Magnificent, 1449–92) was of a thoroughly humanistic disposition. Lorenzo's versatile and energetic nature lent itself equally to politics and philosophy, to martial arts and music. He wrote poetry and literary commentary and formed close ties with Ficino, Pico, and other leading scholars of the academy. He continued his grandfather's lavish patronage of art and learning and was said to have spent half of his city's revenues on the purchase of books alone. Active in many fields, he nonetheless acknowledged the preeminence of the life of the mind. When chided by a friend for sleeping late and not going out to work, Lorenzo replied, "What I have dreamed in one hour is worth more than what you have done in four."

The influence of humanism was evident in many 15th-century Italian courts, including Rome itself, which boasted, in Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini, also known as Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, 1405–64), a humanist pope. It manifested itself strikingly at Urbino, where Federico da Montefeltro (1422–82) turned an isolated hill town into a treasury of Renaissance culture. Schooled by Vittorino in Mantua, Federico chose warfare as his calling. As a mercenary he gained a reputation for winning his battles and keeping his word, and the fortune he accumulated in fees and prizes became the medium for his city's renewal. He brought architects, artists, and scholars to Urbino and built a great palace whose unadorned exterior concealed magnificent chambers, a graceful courtyard, and a secret garden. Federico was enthusiastically devoted to the collection and preservation of books. His library, described by Vespasiano Bisticci as being even more complete than that of the Medici, contained an army of 30 to 40 scribes who were constantly at work. His

own virtues were so notable and diverse as to mark him as a possible model for Rabelais's humanistic giant, Gargantua. Mighty at arms, he was also conscientious in religious observances; supremely powerful, he was nonetheless a modest and courteous companion. Beneath the ivied tranquility of his secret garden stretched an indoor equestrian arena. He commissioned paintings by Piero della Francesca and was the object of humanistic dedications by Poggio, Landino, and Ficino. He kept two organists at court and maintained five men to read the classics aloud at meals. Federico's intellectual accomplishments were impressive. His skill at mathematics shows the influence of Vittorino. He was a good Latinist and as a student of classical history was able to hold his own in conversation with the erudite Pius II. At philosophy Federico was even more astute. Vespasiano wrote that

he began to study logic with the keenest understanding, and he argued with the most nimble wit that was ever seen. After he had heard (Aristotle's) *Ethics* many times, comprehending it so thoroughly that his teachers found him hard to cope with in disputation, he studied the *Politics* assiduously. . . . Indeed, it may be said of him that he was the first of the Signori who took up philosophy and had knowledge of the same. He was ever careful to keep intellect and virtue to the front, and to learn some new thing every day.

Federico's balance and versatility made him, even more than Lorenzo, an example of the humanistic program in action. Baldassare Castiglione, perhaps the most thoughtful of the later Italian humanists, would speak of him as "the light of Italy; there is no lack of living witnesses to his prudence, humanity (*umanità*), justice, intrepid spirit, (and) military discipline." Castiglione described Federico's residence as seeming to be less a palace than "a city in the form of a palace"; one might say as well that this structure, with its elegant accommodation for every creative human activity, was an architectural image of the humanistic mind.

Later Italian humanism: The achievement of Alberti, Federico, and the Medici up to Lorenzo may be seen as the effective culmination of Italian humanism, the ultimate realization of its motives and principles. At the same time as these goals were being achieved, however, the movement was beginning to suffer bifurcation and dilution. Even the enthusiastic Platonism of the Florentine academy was, in its idealism and emphasis on contemplation, a significant digression from the crucial humanistic doctrine of active virtue, and Pico della Mirandola himself was politely admonished by a friend to forsake the ivory tower and accept his civic responsibilities. The conflicting extremes to which sincere humanistic inquiry could drive scholars are nowhere more apparent than in the fact that the arch-idealist Pico and the arch-realist Machiavelli lived in the same town and at the same time. Castiglione, who had belonged to the court of Federico's son Guidobaldo, would be saddened by its decline and shocked when another of his patrons, the "model" Renaissance prince Charles V, ordered the sack of Rome. To a large extent, the cause of these and other vicissitudes lay in the nature of the movement itself, for that boundless diversity which nourished its strength was also a well of potential conflict. Humanists' undifferentiated acceptance of the classical heritage was also in effect an appropriation of the profound controversy implicit in that heritage. Rifts between Platonists, monarchists, and republicans; positivists and skeptics; idealists and cynics; and historians and poets came to be more and more characteristic of humanistic discourse. Some of these tensions had been clear from the start, Petrarch having been ambiguous in his sentiments regarding action versus contemplation, and Salutati having been not wholly clear about whether he preferred republics to monarchies. But the 15th century, bringing with it the irreconcilable heterogeneity of Greek thought, vastly multiplied and deepened these divisions. Of these schisms, the two that perhaps most deeply influenced the course of humanism were the so-called *res-verbum* ("thing-word")

controversy and the split between Platonic idealism and historical realism.

Things and words: Simply put, the *res-verbum* controversy was an extended argument between humanists who believed that language constituted the ultimate human reality and those who believed that language, though an important subject for study, was the medium for understanding an even more basic reality that lay beyond it. The origin of the controversy lay in the debate in the 5th–4th century BC between the Socratic school, which held that language was an important means of understanding deeper truths, and the Sophistic-rhetorical school, which held that "truth" was itself a fiction dependent on varying human beliefs and therefore that language had to be considered the ultimate arbiter. Petrarch, who had no direct contact with the works of Plato and little detailed knowledge of his ideas, drew on Cicero and St. Augustine in his development of a Christian-rhetorical position, holding that "it is more satisfying (*satius*) to will the good than to know the truth" and espousing rhetoric as the effective means of convincing people "to will the good."

This assertion would critically shape the character of humanism through the Renaissance and beyond. It was never effectively challenged by Renaissance Platonists because, for reasons discussed below, Renaissance Platonists, though strong in Platonic idealism, were weak in Platonic analytical method. The enthronement of language as both subject and object of humanistic inquiry is evident in the important work of Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) and Politian (Angelo Poliziano, 1454–94). Valla spoke of language as a "sacrament" and urged that it be studied scientifically and historically as the synthesis of all human thought. For Valla, the study of language was, in effect, the study of humanity. Similarly, Politian held that there were in fact two dialectics: one of ideas and one of words. Rejecting the dialectic of ideas as being too difficult and abstruse, he espoused the dialectic of words (*i.e.*, philology and rhetoric) as the proper human study. This project would bear fruit in the intensive linguistic-philosophical

researches of Mario Nizolio (1498–1575). Though anticipated by Petrarch, the radical emphasis on the primacy of the word constituted a break with the teaching of other early humanists, such as Bruni and Vittorino, who had strongly maintained that the word was of value only through its relationship to perceived reality. Nor did the old viewpoint lack later adherents. In an epistolary debate with Ermolao Barbaro (1454–93), Pico asserted the preeminence of things over words and hence of philosophy over rhetoric: “But if the rightness of names depends on the nature of things, is it the rhetorician we ought to consult about this rightness, or is it the philosopher who alone contemplates and explores the nature of everything?” Appeals of this sort, however, were not to win the day. Philosophical humanism declined because, though rich in conviction, it had failed to establish a systematic relationship between philosophy and rhetoric, between words and things. By the 16th century, Italian humanism was primarily a literary pursuit, and philosophy was left to develop on its own. Despite significant challenges, the division between philosophical and literary studies would solidify in the development of Western culture.

Idealism and the Platonic Academy of Florence:

The idealism so prominent in the Florentine academy is called Platonic because of its debt to Plato's theory of Ideas and to the epistemological doctrine established in his *Symposium* and *Republic*. It did not, however, constitute a complete appreciation or reassertion of Plato's thought. Conspicuously absent from the Florentine agenda was the analytic method (dialectic), which was Socrates' greatest contribution to philosophy. This major omission cannot be explained philologically, at least after Ficino's work had made the complete Platonic corpus available in clear Latin prose. The explanation lies rather in a specific cast of mind and in a dramatically successful forgery. The major Platonists of the mid-15th century, Plethon, Bessarion, and Nicholas of Cusa (Nicholaus Cusanus, 1401–64), had all concentrated their attention on the religious implications of Platonic thought; and, following them, Marsilio Ficino

(1433–99) sought to reconcile Plato with Christ in a *pia philosophia* (“pious philosophy”). The transcendental goals of these philosophers left little room for the painstaking dialectical method that sifted through the details of perception and language, even though Plato himself had repeatedly alleged that transcendence itself was impossible without this method. Along with Plato, moreover, Ficino had translated into Latin the works of the so-called Hermes Trismegistos. These books, which also emphasized transcendence at the expense of method, laid claim to divine authority and to an antiquity far greater than Plato's. They were, in fact, forgeries from a much later period, and are in many ways typical of the idealized and diluted versions of Plato that are called Neoplatonic. But the academy, and for that matter all the other Platonists of the 15th century, bought them wholesale. The result of these factors was a Platonism sans Platonic method, a philosophy that, straining for absolutes, had little interest in establishing its own basis in reality. Near the end of *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione puts a speech typical of Florentine Platonism in the mouth of his friend, the Platonist Pietro Bembo (1470–1547). As Bembo finishes his oration, a female companion tugs at the hem of his robe and says, “Take care, Master Pietro, that with such thoughts your soul does not forsake your body.”

Machiavelli's realism: Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), whose work derived from sources as authentically humanistic as those of Ficino, proceeded along a wholly opposite course. A throwback to the chancellor-humanists Salutati, Bruni, and Poggio, he served Florence in a similar capacity and with equal fidelity, using his erudition and eloquence in a civic cause. Like Vittorino and other early humanists, he believed in the centrality of historical studies, and he performed a signally humanistic function by creating, in *La Mandragola*, the first vernacular imitation of Roman comedy. His characteristic reminders of human weakness suggest the influence of Boccaccio; and like Boccaccio he used these reminders less as satire than as practical gauges of human nature. In one way at least,

Machiavelli is more humanistic (*i.e.*, closer to the classics) than the other humanists, for while Vittorino and his school ransacked history for examples of virtue, Machiavelli (true to the spirit of Polybius, Livy, Plutarch, and Tacitus) embraced all of history, good, evil, and indifferent, as his school of reality. Like Salutati, though perhaps with greater self-awareness, Machiavelli was ambiguous as to the relative merits of republics and monarchies. In both public and private writings (especially the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* ["Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy"]) he showed a marked preference for republican government, while in *The Prince* he developed, with apparent approval, a model of radical autocracy. For this reason, his goals have remained unclear.

His methods, on the other hand, were coherent throughout and remain a major contribution to social science and the history of ideas. Like earlier humanists, Machiavelli saw history as a source of power, but, unlike them (and here perhaps influenced by Sophistic and Averroistic thought), he saw neither history nor power itself within a moral context. Rather he sought to examine history and power in an amoral and hence (to him) wholly scientific manner. He examined human events in the same way that Alberti, Galileo, and the new science examined physical events: as discrete phenomena that had to be measured and described before they could be explained and evaluated. To this extent his work, though original in its specific design, was firmly based in the humanistic tradition. At the same time, however, Machiavelli's achievement significantly eroded humanism. By laying the foundations of modern social science, he created a discipline that, though true to humanistic methodology, had not the slightest regard for humanistic morality. In so doing, he brought to the surface a contradiction that had been implicit in humanism all along: the dichotomy between critical objectivity and moral evangelism.

The achievement of Castiglione: Though Italian humanism was being torn apart by the natural development of its own basic motives, it did not

thereby lose its native attractions. The humanistic experience, in both its positive and negative effects, would be reenacted abroad. Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), whose *Book of the Courtier* affectionately summed up humanistic thought, was one of its most powerful ambassadors. Alert to the major contradictions of the program, yet intensely appreciative of its brilliance and energy, Castiglione wove its various strains together in a long dialogue that aimed at an equipoise between various humanistic extremes. Ostensibly a treatise on the model courtier, *The Book of the Courtier* is more seriously a philosophically organized pattern of conflicting viewpoints in which various positions—Platonist and Aristotelian, idealist and cynic, monarchist and republican, traditional and revolutionary—are given eloquent expression. Unlike most of his humanistic forebears, Castiglione is neither missionary nor polemical. His work is not an effort at systematic knowledge but rather an essay in higher discretion, a powerful reminder that every virtue (moral or intellectual) suggests a concomitant weakness and that extreme postures tend to generate their own opposites. The structure of the dialogue, in which Bembo's Platonic ecstasy is balanced by Bibbiena's assortment of earthy jests, is a testament to this intention. While Castiglione's professed subject matter would epidemically inspire European letters and manners of the 16th century, his more profound contribution would be echoed in the work of Montaigne and Shakespeare. His work suggests a redefined humanism, a virtue matured in irony and directed less toward knowledge than toward wisdom.

Tasso's Aristotelianism: In 16th-century Italy, humanistic methods and attitudes provided the medium for a kaleidoscopic variety of literary and philosophical productions. Of these, the work that perhaps most truly reflected the original spirit of humanism was the *Gerusalemme liberata* of Torquato Tasso (1544–95). New humanistic translations of Aristotle during the 15th century had inspired an Aristotelian Renaissance, and the attention of literary scholars focused particularly on the *Poetics*. In constructing his epic poem, Tasso was strongly influenced by Aristotle's

views regarding the philosophical dimension of poetry; loosely paraphrasing Aristotle, he held (in his *Apologia*) that poetry, by incorporating both particulars and universals, was capable of seeking truth in its perfect wholeness. As a vehicle for philosophical truth, poetry consequently could provide moral education, specifically in such virtues (reinterpreted from a Christian perspective) as Aristotle had described in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The Aristotelian Renaissance thus facilitated the revival of one of the chief articles in the original humanistic constitution: the belief in the poet's role as renewer of culture.

Northern humanism: Though humanism in northern Europe and England sprang largely from Italian sources, it did not emerge exclusively as an outgrowth of later Italian humanism. Non-Italian scholars and poets found inspiration in the full sweep of the Italian tradition, choosing their sources from Petrarch to Castiglione and beyond. Erasmus (c. 1466–1536) was the only other humanist whose international fame in his own time compared with Petrarch's. While lacking Petrarch's polemical zeal and spirit of self-inquiry, he shared the Italian's intense love of language, his dislike for the complexities and pretenses of medieval institutions both secular and religious, and his commanding personal presence. More specifically, however, his ideas and overall direction betray the influence of Lorenzo Valla, whose works he treasured. Like Valla, who had attacked biblical textual criticism with a vengeance and proved the so-called Donation of Constantine to be a forgery, Erasmus contributed importantly to Christian philology. Also like Valla, he philosophically espoused a kind of Christian hedonism, justifying earthly pleasure from a religious perspective. But he was most like Valla (and indeed the entire rhetorical "arm" of Italian humanism) in giving philology prominence over philosophy. He described himself as a poet and orator rather than an inquirer after truth. His one major philosophical effort, a Christian defense of free will, was thunderously answered by Luther. Though his writings are a well of good sense, they are seldom profound and are predominantly derivative. In

Latin eloquence, on the other hand, he was preeminent, both as stylist and theorist. His graceful and abundant Ciceronian prose (whose principles he set down in *De copia verborum et rerum*) helped shape the character of European style. Perhaps his most original work is *Moriae encomium* (*The Praise of Folly*), an elegant combination of satire and poetic insight whose influence was soon apparent in the work of More (to whom it was dedicated) and Rabelais.

The French humanists: Erasmus' associates in France included the influential humanists Robert Gaguin (1433–1501), Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c. 1455–1536), and Guillaume Budé (Guglielmus Budaeus, 1467–1540). Of these three, Budé was most central to the development of French humanism, not only in his historical and philological studies but also in his use of his national influence to establish the Collège de France and the library at Fontainebleau. The influence of Francis I (1494–1547) and his learned sister Margaret of Angoulême (1492–1549) was important in fostering the new learning. The diversity and energy of French humanism is apparent in the activities of the Estienne family of publishers; the poetry of Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85), Joachim du Bellay (c. 1522–60), and Guillaume du Bartas (1544–90); the political philosophy of Jean Bodin (1530–96); the philosophical methodology of Petrus Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée, 1515–72); and the dynamic relationship between humanistic scholarship and church reform (see below, Humanism and Christianity). Hampered by religious repression and compressed more severely in time, the French movement lacked the intellectual fecundity and the programmatic unity of its Italian counterpart. In François Rabelais and Michel de Montaigne, however, the development of humanistic methods and themes resulted in unique and memorable achievement.

François Rabelais (c. 1490–1533): Rabelais ranks with Boccaccio as a founding father of Western realism. As a satirist and stylist (in his hands French prose became a free, poetic form), he influenced writers as important as Jonathan Swift,

Laurence Sterne, and James Joyce and may be seen as a major precursor of modernism. His five books concerning the deeds of the giant princes Gargantua and Pantagruel constitute a treasury of social criticism, an articulate statement of humanistic values, and a forceful, if often outrageous, manifesto of human rights. Rabelaisian satire took aim at every social institution and (especially in Book III) every intellectual discipline. Broadly learned and unflaggingly alert to jargon and sham, he repeatedly focused on dogmas that fetter creativity, institutional structures that reward hypocrisy, educational traditions that inspire laziness, and philosophical methodologies that obscure elemental reality. His heroes, Gargantua and his son and heir Pantagruel, are figures whose colossal size and appetites (Rabelais's etymology for *Pantagruel* is "all-thirsty") symbolize the nobility and omnivorous curiosity that typified the humanistic scheme. The multifarious educational program detailed in *Gargantua* is reminiscent of Vittorino, Alberti, and the Montefeltro court; and the utopian Abbey of Thélème, whose gate bears the motto "Do as you please," is a tribute to enlightened will and pleasure in the manner of Valla, Erasmus, and More. Characteristically overstated and never wholly free of irony, Rabelais's work is a far cry from the earnest moral and educational programs of the early humanists. Rather than rebuild society, he seeks to amuse, edify, and refine it. His qualified endorsement of human dignity is based on the healthy balance of mind and body, the sanctity of all true learning, and the authenticity of direct experience.

Michel de Montaigne (1533–92): Montaigne's famous *Essays* are not only a compendious restatement and reevaluation of humanistic motives but also a milestone in the humanistic project of self-inquiry that had been originally endorsed by Petrarch. Scholar, traveler, soldier, and statesman, Montaigne was, like Machiavelli, alert to both theory and practice; but while Machiavelli saw practice as forming the basis for sound theory, Montaigne perceived in human events a multiplicity so overwhelming as to deny

theoretical analysis. Montaigne's use of typical humanistic modalities—interpretation of the classics, appeals to direct experience, exclusive emphasis on the human realm, and universal curiosity—led him, in other words, to the refutation of a typical humanistic premise: that knowledge of the intellectual arts could teach one a sovereign art of life. In an effort to make his inquiry more inclusive and unsparing, Montaigne made himself the subject of his book, demonstrating through hundreds of personal anecdotes and admissions the ineluctable diversity of a single human spirit. His essays, which seem to move freely from one subject or viewpoint to another, are often in fact carefully organized dialectical structures that draw the reader, through thesis and antithesis, stated subject and relevant association, toward a multidimensional understanding of morality and history. The final essay, grandly titled "Of Experience," counsels a mature acceptance of life in all its contradictions. Human dignity, he implies, is indeed possible, but it lies less in heroic achievement than in painfully won self-knowledge. In this sense Montaigne's attitude toward the humanistic tradition is generally similar to that suggested in the work of Castiglione and Rabelais. While effectively taking issue with a number of the more extreme humanistic contentions, he retained and indeed justified the basic attitudes that gave the movement its form.

The English humanists: English humanism flourished in two stages: the first a basically academic movement that had its roots in the 15th century and culminated in the work of Sir Thomas More, Sir Thomas Elyot, and Roger Ascham, the second a poetic revolution led by Sir Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare.

Though continental humanists had held court positions since the days of Humphrey of Gloucester, English humanism as a distinct phenomenon did not emerge until late in the 15th century. At Oxford William Grocyn (c. 1446–1519) and his student Thomas Linacre (c. 1460–1524) gave impetus to a tradition of classical studies

that would permanently influence English culture. Grocyn and Linacre attended Politian's lectures at the Platonic Academy of Florence. Returning to Oxford, they became central figures in a group that included such younger scholars as John Colet (1466/67–1519) and William Lily (1468?–1522). The humanistic contributions of the Oxford group were philological and institutional rather than philosophical or literary. Grocyn lectured on Greek and theology; Linacre produced several works on Latin grammar and translated Galen into Latin. To Linacre is owed the foundation of the Royal College of Physicians; to Colet, the foundation of St. Paul's School, London. Colet collaborated with Lily (the first headmaster of St. Paul's) and Erasmus in writing the school's constitution, and together the three scholars produced a Latin grammar (known alternately as "Lily's Grammar" and the "Eton Grammar") that would be central to English education for decades to come.

In Sir Thomas More (1478–1535), Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1490–1546), and Roger Ascham (1515–68), English humanism bore fruit in major literary achievement. Educated at Oxford (where he read Greek with Linacre), More was also influenced by Erasmus, who wrote *The Praise of Folly* (Latin *Moriae encomium*) at More's house and named the book punningly after his English friend. More's famous *Utopia*, a kind of companion piece to *The Praise of Folly*, is similarly satirical of traditional institutions (Book I) but offers, as an imaginary alternative, a model society based on reason and nature (Book II). Reminiscent of Erasmus and Valla, More's Utopians eschew the rigorous cultivation of virtue and enjoy moderate pleasures, believing that "Nature herself prescribes a life of joy (that is, pleasure)" and seeing no contradiction between earthly enjoyment and religious piety. Significantly indebted both to classical thought and European humanism, the *Utopia* is also humanistic in its implied thesis that politics begins and ends with humanity: that politics is based exclusively on human nature and aimed exclusively at human happiness. Sir Thomas Elyot chose a narrower subject but developed it in more detail. His great

work, *The Book Named The Governor*, is a lengthy treatise on the virtues to be cultivated by statesmen. Born of the same tradition that produced *The Prince* and *The Courtier*, *The Governor* is typical of English humanism in its emphasis on the accommodation of both classical and Christian virtues within a single moral view. Elyot's other contributions to English humanism include philosophical dialogues, moral essays, translations of ancient and contemporary writers (including Isocrates and Pico), an important Latin-English dictionary, and a highly popular health manual. He served his country as ambassador to the court of Charles V. Finally, the humanistic educational program set up at the turn of the century was vigorously supported by Sir John Cheke (1514–57) and codified by his student Roger Ascham. Ascham's famous pedagogical manual, *The Schoolmaster*, offers not only a complete program of humanistic education but also an evocation of the ideals toward which that education was directed.

Ascham had been tutor to the young princess Elizabeth, whose personal education was a model of humanistic pedagogy and whose writings and patronage bespoke great love of learning. Elizabeth I's reign (1558–1603) saw the last concerted expression of humanistic ideas. Elizabethan humanism, which added a unique element to the history of the movement, was the product not of pedagogues and philologists but of poets and playwrights.

Sidney and Spenser: Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86) was, like Alberti and Federico da Montefeltro, a living pattern of the humanistic ideal. Splendidly educated in the Latin classics at Shrewsbury and Oxford, Sidney continued his studies under the direction of the prominent French scholar Hubert Languet and was tutored in science by the learned John Dee. His brief career as writer, statesman, and soldier was of such acknowledged brilliance as to make him, after his tragic death in battle, the subject of an Elizabethan heroic cult. Sidney's major works, *Astrophel and Stella*, the *Defence of Poesie*, and the two versions of the *Arcadia*, are medleys of humanistic themes. In the sonnet

sequence *Astrophel and Stella*, he surpassed earlier imitators of Petrarch by emulating not only the Italian humanist's subject and style but also his philosophical bent and habit of self-scrutiny. The *Defence of Poesie*, composed (like Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*) in the form of a classical oration, reasserts the theory of poetry as moral doctrine that had been articulated by Petrarch and Boccaccio and revived by the Italian Aristotelians of the 16th century. The later or "new" *Arcadia* is an epic novel whose theoretical concerns include the dualities of contemplation and action, reason and passion, and theory and practice. In this ambitious and unfinished work, Sidney attempts a characteristically humanistic synthesis of classical philosophy, Christian doctrine, psychological realism, and practical politics. Seen as a whole, moreover, Sidney's life and work form a significant contribution to a debate that had been smoldering since the decline of political liberty in Florence in the 15th century. How, it was asked, could humanism be politically active or "civic" in a Europe that was almost exclusively monarchic in structure? Many humanists had counseled retirement from active life, while Castiglione had seen his learned courtier rather as an advisor than as a leader. Sidney and his friend Edmund Spenser (1552/53–1599) sought to resolve this dilemma by creating a form of chivalric humanism. The image (taken on personally by Sidney and elaborated upon by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*) of the hero as questing knight suggests that the humanist, even if not empowered politically, can achieve a valid form of activism by refining, upholding, and representing the values of a just and noble court. Spenser's poetic development of this humanistic program was even more specific than Sidney's. In his famous letter to Raleigh, he asserts that his purpose in *The Faerie Queene* is "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline" and describes a project (never to be completed) of presenting his idea of the Aristotelian virtues in twelve poetic books. As with Sidney, however, this moral didacticism is neither self-righteous nor pedantic. The prescriptive content of *The Faerie Queene* is qualified by a strong emphasis on moral

autonomy and a mature sense of the ambiguity of experience.

Chapman, Jonson, and Shakespeare: The poetry and drama of Shakespeare's time were a concourse of themes, ancient and modern, continental and English. Prominent among these motives were the characteristic topics of humanism. George Chapman (1559?–1634), the translator of Homer, was a forthright exponent of the theory of poetry as moral wisdom, holding that it surpassed all other intellectual pursuits. Ben Jonson (1572–1637) described his own humanistic mission when he wrote that a good poet was able "to inform young men to all good disciplines, inflame grown men to all great virtues, keep old men in their best and supreme state, or, as they decline to childhood, recover them to their first strength" and that the poet was "the interpreter and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things divine no less than human, a master in manners." Jonson, who sought this moral goal both in his tragedies and in his comedies, paid tribute to the humanistic tradition in *Catiline*, a tragedy in which Cicero's civic eloquence is portrayed in heroic terms.

Less overtly humanistic, though in fact more profoundly so, was William Shakespeare (1564–1616). Thoroughly versed (probably at his grammar school) in classical poetic and rhetorical practice, Shakespeare early in his career produced strikingly effective imitations of Ovid and Plautus (*Venus and Adonis* and *The Comedy of Errors*, respectively) and drew on Ovid and Livy for his poem *The Rape of Lucrece*. In *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* he developed Plutarchan biography into drama that, though Elizabethan in structure, is sharply classical in tone. Shakespeare clearly did not accept all the precepts of English humanism at face value. He grappled repeatedly with the problem of reconciling Christian doctrine with effective political action, and for a while (e.g., in *Henry V*) seemed inclined toward the Machiavellian alternative. In *Troilus and Cressida*, moreover, he broadly satirized Chapman's Homeric revival and, more generally, the humanistic habit of

idolizing classical heroism. Finally, he eschewed the moralism, rationalism, and self-conscious erudition of the humanists and was lacking as well in their fraternalism and their theoretical bent. Yet on a deeper level he must be acknowledged the direct and natural heir of Petrarch, Boccaccio, Castiglione, and Montaigne. Like them he delighted more in presenting issues than in espousing systems and held critical awareness, as opposed to doctrinal rectitude, to be the highest possible good. His plays reflect an inquiry into human character entirely in accord with the humanistic emphasis on the dignity of the emotions, and indeed it may be said that his unprecedented use of language as a means of psychological revelation gave striking support to the humanistic contention that language was the heart of culture and the index of the soul. Similarly, Shakespeare's unparalleled realism may be seen as the ultimate embodiment, in poetic terms, of the intense concern for specificity—be it in description, measurement, or imitation—endorsed across the board by humanists from Boccaccio and Salutati on. Shakespearean drama is a treasury of the disputes that frustrated and delighted humanism, including (among many others) action versus contemplation, theory versus practice, *res* versus *verbum*, monarchy versus republic, human dignity versus human depravity, and individualism versus communality. In treating of these polarities, he generally proceeds in the manner of Castiglione and Montaigne, presenting structures of balanced contraries rather than syllogistic endorsements of one side or another. In so doing, he achieves a higher realism, transcending the mere imitation of experience and creating, in all its conflict and fertility, a mirror of mind itself. Since the achievement of such psychological and cultural self-awareness was the primary goal of humanistic inquiry, and since humanists agreed that poetry was an uncommonly effective medium for this achievement, Shakespeare must be acknowledged as a preeminent humanist.

One cannot leave Shakespeare and the phenomenon of English humanism without reference to a highly important aspect of his later

drama. Throughout his career, Shakespeare had shown a keen interest in the concept of art, not only as a general idea but also with specific reference to his own identity as dramatist. In two of his final plays, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, he developed this concept into dramatic and thematic structures that had strongly doctrinal implications. Major characters in both plays practice a moral artistry—a kind of *humanitas* compounded of awareness, experience, imagination, compassion, and craft—that enables them to beguile and dominate other characters and to achieve enduring justice. This special skill, which is cognate with Shakespeare's own dramatic art, suggests a hypothetical solution to many of the dilemmas posed in his earlier work. It implies that problems unavailable to political or religious remedy may be solved by creative innovation and that the art by which things are known and expressed may constitute, in and of itself, a valid field of inquiry and an instrument for cultural renewal. In developing this idea of the sovereignty of art, Shakespeare made the final major contribution to a humanistic tradition that will be discussed in the two sections that follow.

Humanism and the visual arts: Humanistic themes and techniques were woven deeply into the development of Italian Renaissance art; conversely, the general theme of “art” was prominent in humanistic discourse. The mutually enriching character of the two disciplines is evident in a variety of areas.

Realism: Humanists paid conscious tribute to realistic techniques in art that had developed independently of humanism. Giotto di Bondone (c. 1266–1337), the Florentine painter responsible for the movement away from the Byzantine style and toward ancient Roman technique, was praised by Vasari as “the pupil of Nature.” Giotto's own contemporary Boccaccio said of him in the *Decameron* that

there was nothing in Nature—the mother and ruling force of all created things with her constant revolution of the heavens—that he could not paint with his stylus, pen, or brush or make so similar to its original in Nature

that it did not appear to be the original rather than a reproduction. Many times, in fact, in observing things painted by this man, the visual sense of men would err, taking what was painted to be the very thing itself.

Boccaccio, himself a naturalist and a realist, here subtly adopts the painter's achievement as a justification for his own literary style. So Shakespeare, at the end of the Renaissance, praises Giulio Romano (and himself), "who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape" (*The Winter's Tale*). It should be noted that neither Vasari, Boccaccio, nor Shakespeare endorses realistic style as a *summum bonum*: realism is rather the means for regaining touch with the sovereign creative principle of Nature.

Classicism: Like the humanists, Italian artists of the 15th century saw a profound correlation between classical forms and realistic technique. Classical sculpture and Roman painting were emulated because of their ability to simulate perceived phenomena, while, more abstractly, classical myth offered a unique model for the artistic idealization of human beauty. Alberti, himself a close friend of Donatello and Brunelleschi, codified this humanistic theory of art, using the fundamental principle of mathematics as a link between perceived reality and the ideal. He developed a classically based theory of proportionality between architectural and human form, believing that the ancients sought "to discover the laws by which Nature produced her works so as to transfer them to the works of architecture."

Anthropocentricity and individualism: Humanism and Italian art were similar in giving paramount attention to human experience, both in its everyday immediacy and in its positive or negative extremes. The religious themes that dominated Renaissance art (partly because of generous church patronage) were frequently developed into images of such human richness that, as one contemporary observer noted, the Christian message was submerged. The human-

centredness of Renaissance art, moreover, was not just a generalized endorsement of earthly experience. Like the humanists, Italian artists stressed the autonomy and dignity of the individual. High Renaissance art boasted a style of portraiture that was at once humanely appreciative and unsparing of detail. Heroes of culture such as Federico da Montefeltro and Lorenzo de' Medici, neither of whom was a conventionally handsome man, were portrayed realistically, as though a compromise with strict imitation would be an affront to their dignity as individuals. Similarly, artists of the Italian Renaissance were, characteristically, unabashed individualists. The biographies of Giotto, Brunelleschi, Leonardo, and Michelangelo by Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) not only describe artists who were well aware of their unique positions in society and history but also attest to a cultural climate in which, for the first time, the role of art achieved heroic stature. The autobiographical writings of the humanist Alberti, the scientist Gerolamo Cardano (1501–76), and the artist Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71) further attest to the individualism developing both in letters and in the arts; and Montaigne dramatized the analogy between visual mimesis and autobiographical realism when he said, in the preface to his *Essays*, that given the freedom he would have painted himself "*tout entier, et tout nu*" ("totally complete, and totally nude").

Art as philosophy: Italian Renaissance painting, especially in its secular forms, is alive with visually coded expressions of humanistic philosophy. Symbol, structure, posture, and even colour were used to convey silent messages about humanity and nature. Renaissance style was so articulate, and the Renaissance sense of the unity of experience so deeply ingrained, that even architectural structures could be eloquently philosophical. Two features of Federico's palace at Urbino exemplify the profound interrelationship between humanistic principle and Renaissance art. The first feature is architectural. On the ground floor of the palace two private chapels, of roughly the same dimensions, stand side by side. The chapel at the left is a place of Christian

worship, while that at the right is dedicated to the pagan Muses. Directly above these chapels is a study, the walls of which are covered with representations (in intarsia) of assorted humanistic heroes: Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, Seneca, Boethius, St. Augustine, Dante, Petrarch, Bessarion, and Federico's revered teacher Vittorino, among others. The message conveyed by the positioning of the three rooms is hard to ignore. Devotion to the opposed principles of Christianity and earthly (pagan) beauty is rendered possible by a humanistic learning (represented by the study) so generous and appreciative as to comprehend both extremes. The second feature is iconographic—a portrait of Federico and his son Guidobaldo (probably by Pedro Berruguete) that occupies a central position on the wall of the study. It depicts the Duke, his full coat of armour partly covered by a courtly robe, sitting and reading. The son stands beside his father's chair, gazing out of the picture toward the viewer's left. An abbot's mitre rests on a shelf in the upper left, while the Duke's helmet sits on the floor in the lower right. Here also a typically humanistic message is evident. The Duke's scholarly attitude and curious attire suggest his triple role as warrior, ruler, and humanist. The two main axes of the picture—the line between mitre and helmet and the line between father and son—converge at the book, symbolizing the central role of humanistic learning in reconciling the concerns of church and state and in conveying humanistic virtue from generation to generation. The boy's outward gaze implies the characteristic direction of humanistic learning: into the world of action. The scope and organic wholeness of Federico's humanistic iconography are so striking as to rival great expressions of religious faith. The private heart of his palace concealed, like a genetic code, the principle that had given shape to the edifice and informed the state.

Humanism, art, and science: It is impossible to speak knowledgeably about Renaissance science without first understanding the Renaissance concept of art. The Latin *ars* (inflected as *artis*) was applied indiscriminately to the verbal disciplines, mathematics, music, and science (the “liberal

arts”), as well as to painting, sculpture, and architecture; it also could refer to technological expertise, to magic, and to alchemy. Any discipline involving the cultivation of skill and excellence was de facto an art. To the Renaissance, moreover, all arts were “liberal” arts in their capacity to “free” their practitioners to function effectively in specific areas. The art of rhetoric empowered the rhetorician to convince; the art of perspective empowered the painter to create visual illusion; the art of physics empowered the scientist to predict the force and motion of objects. “Art,” in effect, was no more or less than articulate power, the technical or intellectual analogy to the political power of the monarch and the divine power of the god. The historical importance of this equation cannot be overestimated. If one concept may be said to have integrated all the varied manifestations of Renaissance culture and given organic unity to the period, it was this definition of art as power. With this definition in mind, one may understand why Renaissance humanists and painters assigned themselves such self-consciously heroic roles: in their artistic ability to delight, to captivate, to convince, they saw themselves as enfranchised directors and remakers of culture. One may also understand why a humanist-artist-scientist like Alberti would have seen no real distinction between the various disciplines he practiced. As profoundly interconnected means of understanding nature and humanity, and as media for effective reform and renewal, these disciplines were all components of an encompassing art. A similar point may be made about Machiavelli, who wrote a book about the “art” of warfare and who used history and logic to develop an art of government, or about the brilliant polymath Paracelsus, who spent his whole career perfecting an art that would comprehend all matter and all spirit. With the equation of art and power in mind, finally, one may understand why a revolutionary scientist like Galileo (1564–1642) put classical and medieval science through a winnowing fan, keeping only such components as allowed for physically reproducible results. Since every Renaissance art aimed for a dominion or conquest, it was

completely appropriate that science should leave its previously contemplative role and focus upon the conquest of nature.

Humanism benefited the development of science in a number of more specific ways. Alberti's technological applications of mathematics, and his influential statement that mathematics was the key to all sciences, grew out of his humanistic education at Padua. Vittorino, another student at Padua, went on to make mathematics a central feature of his educational program. Gerolamo Cardano, a scholar of renowned humanistic skills, made major contributions to the development of algebra. In short, the importance of mathematics in humanistic pedagogy and the fact that major humanists like Vittorino and Alberti were also mathematicians may be seen as contributing to the critical role mathematics would play in the rise of modern science. Humanistic philology, moreover, supplied scientists with clean texts and clear Latin translations of the classical works—Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, and even Ptolemy—that furthered their studies. The richness of the classical heritage in science is often underestimated. Galileo, who considered Archimedes his mentor, also prized the dialogues of Plato, in particular the *Meno*. The German philosopher Ernst Cassirer has demonstrated the likelihood that Galileo was fond of the *Meno* because it contained the first statement of the “hypothetical” method, a *modus operandi* that characterized Galileo's own scientific practice and that would come to be known as one of the chief principles of the New Science. Humanism may also be seen as offering, of itself, methods and attitudes suitable for application in nonhumanistic fields. It might be argued, for example, that the revolutionary social science of Machiavelli and Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540) was due in large measure to their application of humanistic techniques to fields that lay outside the normal purview of humanism. But most of all it was the general spirit of humanism—critical, questing, ebullient, precise, focused on the physical world, and passionate in its quest for results—that fostered the development of the scientific spirit in social studies and natural

philosophy.

Humanism and Christianity: Though much humanistic activity was specifically Christian in intention, and though the majority of humanists made firm avowals of faith, the relationship between Christianity and humanism is complex and not wholly untroubled. First, humanists from Petrarch onward recognized that the classical (pagan) direction of humanism necessarily constituted, if not a challenge to Christianity, at least a breach in the previous totality of Christian devotion. The Christian truth that had been acknowledged as comprehending all phenomena, earthly or heavenly, now had to coexist with a classical attitude that was overwhelmingly directed toward earthly life. Humanistic efforts to resolve the contradictions implied by these two attitudes were, if one may judge by their variety, never wholly successful. In particular, the extent to which humanistic inquiry led scholars toward the secular realm, and the extent to which humanistic pedagogy concentrated on secular subjects, suggest erosions of the domain of faith. Coluccio Salutati, who urged the young Poggio not to let humanistic enthusiasm take precedence over Christian piety, thereby acknowledged a dualism implicit in the humanistic program and never wholly absent from its historical development.

Second, the humanistic philology that meticulously compared ancient sources and “cleaned up” the texts of important Christian writings was a serious challenge to the authority of the church. With new authorities or refined texts in hand, humanists found fault with established commentaries and questioned traditional interpretations. Valla's arraignment of the Donation of Constantine and Bessarion's discovery that the supposed Dionysius the Areopagite (later called Pseudo-Dionysius) had borrowed some of his material from Plato exemplify the uneasy relationship between humanism and Catholic dogma. Third, the independent and broadly critical attitude innate to humanism could not but threaten the unanimity of Christian belief. Intellectual

individualism, which has never been popular in any church, put particular stress on a religion that encouraged simple faith and alleged universal authority. Finally, humanism repeatedly fostered the impulse of religious reform. The humanistic emphasis on total authenticity and direct contact with sources had, as its religious correlative, a desire to obliterate the medieval accretions and procedural complexities that stood between the worshiper and his god. The reform-mindedness of such humanists as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Erasmus, and Rabelais was balanced on the religious side by reformers such as Calvin and Melancthon, who employed humanistic techniques in their own cause. And the reform movement, while it may have modernized and thus preserved Christianity, rang the death knell for a medieval culture whose essential characteristic had been participation in a universal church.

Later fortunes of humanism: Shakespeare may be seen as the last major interpreter of the humanistic program. Sir Francis Bacon and John Milton, though formidably adept at humanistic techniques, diverged in their major work from the central current of humanism, Bacon toward natural science, Milton toward theology. If Bacon's rationalism may be seen as a link between humanism and the Enlightenment, his strong emphasis on nature (rather than humanity) as subject matter presaged the permanent separation of the sciences from the humanities. In Milton's theocentricity, on the other hand, lay the Christian distrust (going back, perhaps, to Luther) of humanistic secularism. These epochal divergences, moreover, were complemented by a series of rifts and ramifications within the humanistic movement. The split between philosophy and letters was, over future generations, to be compounded by the development of countless discrete specialties within both fields. Philosophers came more and more to define themselves within narrow boundaries. Creative writers and "critics" took up distinct positions and assumed adversarial relationships. The profound loss of coherence in humane letters was furthered by the gradual decline of Latin as the lingua franca of European

intellectuals and the consequent separation of national traditions.

By the 19th century, humanism was such a lost art as to have to be reassembled, like a disjointed fossil, by careful historians. Of course there were exceptions. Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) reasserted humanistic values in a broad-based attack on contemporary institutions, and in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) can be found the serious intention and multifarious curiosity that characterized humanism at its best. Strong humanistic motives may be found in Germany at the turn of the 19th century, particularly in the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831); while Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was perhaps the last individual whose breadth of achievement and sense of the unity of experience lived up to the ideal established by Alberti.

More recently, the mode of inquiry and interpretation developed by the political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899–1973) showed strong signs of the humanistic spirit. But in general the traces of the original program have been scattered. To the modern mind, a "humanist" is a university scholar, walled off from the interdisciplinary scope of the original humanistic program and immune to the active experience that was its basis and its goal. This decline is easy enough to explain. Had there been nothing else, one external factor would have made the cultivation of *humanitas*, as originally practiced, more and more difficult from the beginning of the 16th century on. The proliferation of published work in all fields, and the creation of many new fields, made increasingly impracticable the development of the comprehensive learning and awareness that were central to the original program. In 1500 the major texts constituting a humanistic education, though numerous, could still be counted; by 1900 they were legion, and people had long ceased agreeing about exactly which ones they were. But problems implicit in the movement were equally responsible for its demise. The characteristic

emphases on rhetoric and philology, which gave the humanistic movement vitality and made it available to countless students of moderate gifts, also betokened its impermanence. Weak in dialectic or any other comprehensively analytic method, the movement had no instrument for self-examination, no medium for self-renewal. By the same token, neither had humanism any valid means of defense against the attackers—scientists, fundamentalists, materialists, and others—who camped in ever larger numbers on its borders. Lacking an integral method, finally, humanism in effect lacked a centre and became prey to an endless series of ramifications. While eloquent humanists rambled through Europe and spread the word about the classics, the method that might have unified their efforts lay, available but unheeded, in texts of Plato and Aristotle. Given this core of rigorous analysis, humanism might (all other challenges notwithstanding) have retained its basic character for centuries. But ironically it might also have failed to attract followers.

Conclusion: Though lacking permanence itself, humanism in large measure established the climate and provided the medium for the rise of modern thought. An impressive variety of major developments in literature, philosophy, art, religion, social science, and even natural science had their basis in humanism or were significantly nourished by it. Important spokesmen in all fields regularly made use of humanistic eloquence to further their causes. More generally, the so-called modern awareness—that sense of alienation and freedom applied both to the individual and to the race—derives ultimately, for better or worse, from humanistic sources. But with humanism, as with every other historical subject, one should beware lest valid concern about changes, crises, sources, and influences obscure the even more important issues of human continuity and human value. Whatever its weaknesses and inner conflicts, the humanistic movement was heroic in its breadth and energy, remarkable in its aspirations. For human development in all fields, it created a context of seldom-equaled fertility. Its characteristic modalities of thought, speech, and

image lent themselves to the promptings of genius and became the media for enduring achievement. Its moral program formed the basis for lives that are remembered with admiration.

Additional Reading—General treatments: The three general studies most helpful in approaching the phenomenon of humanism are Eugenio Garin, *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*, trans. from the Italian (1965, reprinted 1975); Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (1979); and Charles Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (1983). Garin's book is probably the most unified and incisive treatment of Italian humanism yet produced, while Kristeller and Trinkaus offer extremely well-documented analyses of major issues in the history and historiography of humanism. Other valuable readings include Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, rev. ed. (1966); Quirinus Breen, *Christianity and Humanism: Studies in the History of Ideas* (1968); Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Period of the Renaissance in Italy: An Essay* (1878; originally published in German, 1860), available in later English-language editions; Douglas Bush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (1939, reprinted 1972); Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (1964, reprinted 1972; originally published in German with appendices, 1927); Jack D'amico, *Knowledge and Power in the Renaissance* (1977); Myron P. Gilmore, *The World of Humanism, 1453–1517* (1952; reprinted 1983); Denys Hay, *The Italian Renaissance in Its Historical Background*, 2nd ed. (1977); Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Concepts of Man, and Other Essays* (1972); Edward P. Mahoney (ed.), *Philosophy and Humanism* (1976); Robert Mandrou, *From Humanism to Science, 1480 to 1700* (1979; originally published in French, 1973); Heiko A. Oberman and Thomas A. Brady, Jr. (eds.), *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of Its European Transformations* (1975); Charles B. Schmitt, *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science* (1981); John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, 7 vol. (1875–86, reprinted 1971–72); Guiseppe Toffanin,

History of Humanism (1954; originally published in Italian, 1933); Berthold L. Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (1975); and Roberto Weiss, *The Spread of Italian Humanism* (1964). For classical and medieval backgrounds, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1973; originally published in German, 1948); Moses Hadas, *Humanism: The Greek Ideal and Its Survival* (1960, reprinted 1972); and Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, 2nd ed., 3 vol. (1965; originally published in German, 1934).

Specific topics: T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944, reprinted 1966); Hans Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni: Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature* (1968); Gene Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (1969, reprinted 1983); Ernst Cassirer, "Galileo's Platonism," in M.f. Ashley Montagu (ed.), *Studies and Essays in the History of Science and Learning*, pp. 277–297 (1946; reprinted 1975); Joan Gadol, *Leon Battista Alberti* (1969); Eugenio Garin, *Science and Civic Life in the Italian Renaissance* (1969, reissued 1978; originally published in Italian, 1965; 4th Italian ed., 1980); Paul Oskar Kristeller and Philip P. Wiener (eds.), *Renaissance Essays* (1968); Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390–1460* (1963); James J. Murphy (ed.), *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric* (1983); Irwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renaissances in Western Art*, 2 vol. (1960, reissued in 1 vol., 1969); J.H. Plumb (ed.), *Renaissance Profiles* (1965); Pasquale Rotondi, *The Ducal Palace of Urbino: Its Architecture and Decoration* (1969; originally published in Italian in 2 vol., 1950–51); Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (1983); Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vol. (1970), and *The Poet as Philosopher: Petrarch and the Formation of Renaissance Consciousness* (1979); Berthold L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (1963); William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators* (1897, reissued 1970), and *Studies in Education During the Age of the Renaissance, 1400–1600* (1906,

reissued 1967); and G.F. Young, *The Medici*, 2 vol. (1909, reissued in 1 vol., 1933).

Works of the humanists: Works by the later humanists (c. 1500 and after) and the English poet-humanists mentioned in the article, including Castiglione, Cellini, Elyot, Erasmus, Jonson, Machiavelli, Montaigne, More, Pico della Mirandola, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, Tasso, and Vasari, are readily available in many modern English editions. For the writings of the earlier humanists, see Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. by Renée Neu Watkins (1969); Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. by Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (1982), and *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. by Charles G. Osgood (1956, reprinted 1978), a translation of the preface and books 14 and 15 of his *De genealogia deorum gentilium*; biographies of Dante by Boccaccio and Leonardo Bruni in *The Earliest Lives of Dante*, trans. by James Robinson Smith (1901, reprinted 1976); letters by Poggio Bracciolini in *Two Renaissance Book Hunters*, trans. by Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (1974); and works by Petrarch, including *The Life of Solitude*, trans. by Jacob Zeitlin (1924, reprinted 1978); "On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others," trans. by Hans Nachod in Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (1948, reprinted 1971); and *Petrarch's Secret; or, The Soul's Conflict with Passion*, trans. by William H. Draper (1911, reprinted 1978). William Harrison Woodward, *op. cit.*, contains valuable translations of works by Vergerio, Bruni, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pius II), and Battista Guarino. Sixteenth-century writings that reflect the breadth and vitality of humanistic attitudes are Juan Luis Vives, *On Education*, trans. by Foster Watson (1913, reprinted 1971); Girolamo Cardano, *The Book of My Life*, trans. by Jean Stoner (1930, reprinted 1962); Torquato Tasso, *Tasso's Dialogues*, trans. by Carnes Lord and Dain A. Trafton (1982); and Paracelsus, *Selected Writings*, trans. by Norbert Guterman, 2nd rev. ed. (1958; reissued with a new bibliography, 1969; originally published in German, 1942, ed. by Jolande Jacobi).

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