

HUMANISM

The term 'humanism'

- research term from the nineteenth century
- roots in the language usage of the time around 1500 (studia humanitatis, humanista, l'humanisme)
- modern research uses this term to describe an intellectual movement that emerged from the Renaissance and, from the mid-fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century, sought individual and social renewal by returning to ancient forms and norms

Renaissance

- self-distancing from the 'Middle Ages' → rediscovery of pre-Christian ancient culture
- focus on the here and now, anthropological interest, optimism

Italian Renaissance humanism of the fifteenth century

- initiated by Petrarch in the second half of the fourteenth century → around 1400, formation of scholarly networks → in the fifteenth century, spread throughout Italy and influence on Europe
- the humanists are predominantly not independent scholars who rely on patronage, but come from wealthy families or hold positions in universities, administration, or the church; the humanists define themselves through their mastery and cultivation of the 'litterae'
- protagonists: Francesco Petrarca (1304–74), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75), Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), Lorenzo Valla (1407–57), Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94)
- texts from pagan Antiquity provide a twofold orientation: form (aesthetics) + norm (ethics) → rediscovery and collection of ancient Latin and Greek texts (source criticism) → eloquence through emulation of exemplary texts; Cicero as an important authority for form and norm (Ciceronianism)
- self-distancing from Aristotelianism and scholasticism; revaluation of the liberal arts, especially grammar and rhetoric (little interest in logic), expansion of academic education to include poetics and history, preference for ethics over metaphysics (anti-speculative approach); little interest in natural science (which continues to be influenced by Aristotle); approaches to humanistic university reform; adoption of philosophical traditions: Neoplatonism – Hermeticism – Kabbalah – Neo-Aristotelianism; interest in the vernacular and in local history
- interdisciplinary influence: history, medicine, law, education, political philosophy, architecture, art etc.
- direct connection between ancient texts and contemporary practice: Cicero guides people toward vita activa in the here and now → "civic humanism" (focus on the common good, making antiquity accessible through educational efforts and translations, political engagement)
- approaches to biblical humanism: Christian influence on Renaissance humanism, interest in the original languages of the Bible, critical examination of textual tradition, interest in the Church Fathers, connection between pagan antiquity and Christian tradition
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Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/69–1536)

- biography:** ordained as a priest in 1492, studied theology in Paris from 1495 to 1499, 1499–1516 travels (France, Netherlands, Switzerland, England, Italy) → development into a humanist publicist, 1515–25 decade of greatest influence
- major works:** 1500 (1515): *Adagia* (revised and expanded several times) – 1503 (1518): *Enchiridion militis christiani* – 1511 (1514): *Moriae encomium* – 1518 (1522): *Colloquia familiaria* (revised and expanded several times) – 1516: *Novum instrumentum* (revised and expanded several times) – 1516: multi-volume edition of the works of Jerome – 1516: *Institutio principis christiani* – 1516/17: *Iulius exclusus* – 1517: *Querela pacis* – 1517: Paraphrases on the Epistle to the Romans (followed by further paraphrases on the New Testament) – 1524: *Diatribae de libero arbitrio* – 1528: *Ciceronianus* – 1533: *De sancienda ecclesiae concordia* – 1533: *Explicatio symboli apostolorum* – 1535: *Ecclesiastes*
- core ideas:**
 - litterae:** authentic Christianity is found in the original sources and in their early interpreters, therefore philology and exegesis based on the New Testament and the Church Fathers are essential
 - philosophia Christi:** spiritualism (spirit-flesh opposition), moralism (Christianity = morality, not dogma and cult, striving for sanctification), practical orientation (no speculation), Christ orientation (Christ as teacher of perfection and role model)
 - criticism of the Church:** scholasticism, secularization of the institution, externalization of piety
 - reform of Christianity and the world:** education as the key to change, divine law as the guiding principle of the *respublica christiana*, church as a moral educator (not as a cultic institution of salvation)

Biblical humanism in the sixteenth century

1480–1510: formative phase

- inspired by study experiences in Italy formation of networks of scholars in Western, Central, and Central Eastern Europe
- protagonists: Rudolf Agricola (1444–85), Jakob Wimpheling (1450–1528), Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), Sebastian Brant (1457–1521), Konrad Celtis (1459–1508), Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c. 1460–1536), Konrad Peutinger (1465–1547), Guillaume Budé (1468–1540), Willibald Pirckheimer (1470–1530), Konrad Mutianus (1470–1526),
- formation of humanist groups: princely courts, Latin schools in wealthy cities, universities, sodalitates, printing houses
- use of the new technology of letterpress printing → important literary genres: editions of classical texts, humanist textbooks on various topics, collections of correspondence, literary dialogues
- educational reform: study of ancient languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew) and revaluation and reform of the study of the liberal arts (philology, rhetoric, poetics, history, ethics) → humanist renewal of Latin schools and growing presence in universities
- since 1500: increased practical involvement in the political sphere (imperial cities, princely courts)

1510–25: peak period

- protagonists: Reuchlin, Lefèvre, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/69–1536), John Colet (1467–1519), Thomas More (1477/78–1535), Beatus Rhenanus (1485–1547), Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540), Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523)
- Christian humanism: synthesis of antiquity and Christianity through optimistic anthropology and moralism, recourse to the authentic biblical texts in Hebrew and Greek and to the Church Fathers, criticism of the church (institution of the church, clergy, dogmatic speculation, participation in the Gravamina movement, Reuchlin controversy), advocating Bible translation into the vernacular
- publication of the main works of the protagonists of biblical humanism and widespread impact of their reform ideas: Lefèvre, *Quincuplex Psalterium* (1509) – Erasmus, *Moriae encomium* (1511) – Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel* (1511) – Lefèvre, commentary on the Epistles of Paul (1512) – *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* (1515–17) – Erasmus, *Novum instrumentum* (1516) – More, *Utopia* (1516) – Erasmus, new edition of the *Enchiridion* (1518) – Melancthon, *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis* (1518) – Erasmus, *Diatribae de libero arbitrio* (1524)

1525–50: connection with the Reformation → split in the humanist movement

- protagonists: Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), Philip Melancthon (1497–1560), Johannes Sleidanus (1506–56), Johannes Sturm (1507–89)
- similarities between humanism and the Reformation: interest in ancient sources, philological interest, book culture, practical effectiveness, moralism, education, reform of the church and the world → strong humanistic influence on the Reformation → may Protestant reformers influenced by biblical humanism: Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampad, Melancthon, Laski, Calvin and others
- differences between humanism and the Reformation: anthropology, soteriology, ethics → mutual demarcation between a significant portion of the humanist movement and the Reformation
- humanist influence on the radical Reformation: mystical spiritualism (Sebastian Franck) and Anabaptism (Konrad Grebel) take over humanist ideas and interests (church criticism, focus on the 'divine self')
- humanism in the papal church: tensions between scholasticism and humanism, adoption of humanistic interests and techniques (irenicism of the 1530s and 40s → Erasmus legacy, Jesuits → education)

1550–1600: late humanism within the confessional churches

- protagonists: Sebastian Castellio (1515–63), Jean Bodin (1529/30–96), Michel de Montaigne (1533–92), Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645)
- practical orientation: studia humanitatis as a constitutive aspect of class culture of nobility and bourgeoisie around 1600 (political and economic elites as promoters of studia humanitatis), completion of the humanistic transformation of the education system (litterae more as educational assets than as a resource for meaning, Ramism, University of Helmstedt), growing interest in medicine and natural sciences, political utilization (Neo-Stoicism, jurisprudence, engagement with history)
- close connection between humanism and Christianity: religion as the key to a holistic worldview; but also humanistic skepticism, which relativizes confessional claims to truth
- the fusion of late humanism and confessional Christianity gives rise to Baroque culture in the seventeenth century