New Humanism and Historical Humanism: On Two Recent Books by Michele Ciliberto and Massimo Cacciari[1]

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Abstract

The need for a new humanism is strongly felt in present-day Italian and European culture. This need gives rise to the question: what is the relationship between this new humanism and historical humanism?

A few years ago, one of the most esteemed Italian historians of philosophy, Michele Ciliberto, posed this question in his book *Il nuovo Umanesimo* (2017). This book presents a rather gloomy image of Italian humanism as an age of great uncertainty, of transformation and crisis, and above all as an age characterised by an anguished questioning as to the human being and its destiny. Massimo Cacciari's book *La mente inquieta* (2019), which is connected to Ciliberto's *Il nuovo umanesimo* in many ways, presents a similar image of Italian humanism.

In this essay, I will examine the common features of these books and then evaluate their meaning for present-day attempts to give life to a new humanism.

1. *Michele Ciliberto's Ethical-Political Proposal*

The need for a new humanism is strongly felt in present-day Italian and European culture. Presently, it is perhaps easier to find expressions of this need in the fields of religion and politics than it is to find them in the specific field of philosophy. In the field of religion, one notices the frequency with which the most recent popes have spoken about the need for a new humanism,[2] whereas in the field of politics one might remember that in 2018 the present-day president of the Republic of France, Emmanuel Macron, addressed the United Nations Organisation about the

[1] This paper is an extended version of my talk at the 2023 annual meeting of SIP – the Society for Italian Philosophy. I thank the Co-Directors of SIP, Silvia Benso and Antonio Calcagno, for the invitation.

[2] A search for the phrase 'new humanism' on the web site of the Vatican can make us aware of the increased frequency of its use by popes and by the highest Catholic hierarchy from the Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* (https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) and Paul VI's address to the last meeting of the Second Vatican Council (https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_epilogo-concilio.html), both of December 1965, to the present; Benedict XVI was probably the pope who employed this term the most frequently, but also John Paul II and Francis have often used it.

responsibility to build a *nouvel humanisme contemporain;*[3] with reference to Italy, Giuseppe Conte, former Prime Minister, has also expressed the need for a new humanism in some of his speeches.[4]

This need for a new humanism, both from the field of religion and from the field of politics, obviously challenges philosophy or at least inspires many philosophical questions. One such question asks: what is the relationship between this new humanism and historical humanism?

This is the fundamental question that one of the most esteemed Italian historians of philosophy, Michele Ciliberto, posed a few years ago in his book *Il nuovo Umanesimo* (The New Humanism),[5] a book that calls into question both the meaning of the 'new humanism' and the reasons why the culture of humanism is of vital relevance today.

Ciliberto's book is divided into two parts: a broad introduction (about a third of the book) and an anthology of writings by authors belonging to historical humanism: Leon Battista Alberti, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Niccolò Machiavelli, Gerolamo Cardano, Michel de Montaigne, Tommaso Campanella, Paolo Sarpi, Lorenzo Valla, Pietro Pomponazzi, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Martin Luther, Giordano Bruno, Francesco Pucci, Marsilio Ficino, Filarete, Girolamo Savonarola, Francesco Guicciardini and Filippo Strozzi. This anthology aims to illustrate and corroborate the theses that the author proposes in the introduction, which is therefore the most important part of the book.

Ciliberto states that historical humanism and its thinking have a vital relevance to our time; therefore, his stance might look similar to many others which preach the necessity of a new humanism. However, if we follow the way in which Ciliberto treats many of the features of historical humanism (those features which, according to him, are the most significant for the relevance of humanistic thought in present-day culture), we can understand the originality of his stance. According to Ciliberto, humanism is relevant to today's culture and world because it consists in a reflection on the human being and its destiny, and because questions about the human condition become particularly sharp and urgent in periods of crisis and transformation, as in our time or the time of humanism. Today, according to Ciliberto, we are experiencing an epochal change: the once familiar structures of the world seem to be collapsing, and yet we are not able to see what might replace them.[6] For this reason, we are once again called to question the human condition

[3] The text of the speech can be read on the website of the Presidency of the Republic of France: https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2018/09/26/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-emmanuel-macron-a-la-73e-assemblee-generale-des-nations-unies.

[4] See for example p. 13 of the official transcript of Giuseppe Conte's speech to the Senate of the Italian Republic of 10th August 2019 (https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/1123287.pdf).

[5] Michele Ciliberto, *Il nuovo Umanesimo* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2017).

[6] Ibid., IX.

and human destiny, as did the humanists who faced the crisis of Italy (and then, with the Reformation, the crisis of religious unity in Europe).

As we can clearly see, for Ciliberto the renewal of humanism is not an *answer* to the evils of our time; rather, it marks the start or the resumption of a complex questioning in a situation of crisis and transformation. Thus, the aim of this renewed humanistic thinking would not be to confront this crisis or this transformation head on, but to understand it, to look for the best way to live in it and also — in accordance with a typical feature of humanism, namely, the strong connection between theory and praxis — to take advantage of this moment of transformation and enact true reform.

At the heart of this perspective on the relation between historical humanism and the present time of crisis and transformation rests a fundamental distinction: on the one side is humanism, as the common patrimony or the shared horizon of thought for the most important thinkers of the age, and on the other, what Ciliberto calls 'humanistic ideology', an ideology which, according to him, irreversibly belongs to the past. This ideology consists in a strong assertion or even celebration of the dignity of the human being, of its freedom and its abilities.

As one can easily see, in the debates about the need for a new humanism the discussion centres precisely on the need to reassert the absolute dignity of the human being and on the urgency to protect this dignity against the dehumanising features of the contemporary age. Therefore, the focus of these debates is precisely what Ciliberto calls 'humanistic ideology'.

Certainly, this assertion of human dignity is nothing extraneous to the culture of the age of humanism; on the contrary, it is famously one of its important aspects — the *Oratio de hominis dignitate* by Pico della Mirandola is typically considered to be the work which best represents the spirit of the age. Obviously, Ciliberto does not deny that the assertion of human dignity is an important aspect of historical humanism and its thinking; nonetheless, he draws attention to other topics addressed by the authors of the age of humanism, thus showing that the celebration of human dignity is neither the central topic to which the other topics serve as corollaries, nor the most widely shared topic among Pico's contemporaries.

The most typical view of humanism, according to Ciliberto, stems from a historiography that, starting from the Enlightenment, intended to present humanism as the origin of modernity.[7] This intention resulted in a view of humanism that is at best partial, if not distorted. This view emerges when many important aspects of that age's culture are blotted out: not only aspects like the interest that many of the authors had in magic or astrology (these aspects, clearly, are the aspects which cannot be resumed today, so Ciliberto himself does not devote a great deal of attention to them), but all of the topics of humanistic thought and culture that are dramatic or tragic, like the fragility of the human being at the mercy of unpredictable events, the difficulty of recognising in these events the

[7] Ibid., 45–47.

presence of a just God, the need to use deception in political life (and often also in private life), the reflection on an age of crisis, and so on.

Ciliberto considers all of these topics, offering a picture of humanism that is clearly gloomier than the one with which we are familiar; we might indeed have the impression that this presentation lacks the usual bright and serene sides of humanism. Ciliberto himself admits that in order to present a view of humanism that differs so much from the familiar one, it must be presented in the most radical way, even running the risk of opposing the typically one-sided view with its extreme and similarly one-sided opposite.[8]

From this perspective, the feature that appears as the primary characteristic of the protagonists of humanism is a tension between disenchantment and utopia: on one side, the acknowledgment both of the historical crisis and of the constitutive limits of the human being, and on the other side, the constant attempt to seek ways to overcome the crisis (taking the painful events of the age as an opportunity for a true *renovatio mundi*, a renewal of the world) and to transcend the limits of the human being. This tension between disenchantment and utopia, according to Ciliberto, is what gives the culture of humanism its vital relevance in the present situation of crisis and transformation. In this situation, to deny the crisis, or to surrender to it, would be impotent.

Clearly, at the end of this short presentation of Ciliberto's book, one might think that its primary goal belongs to historical research and consists in a correction of the typical view of humanism by a richer and more historically correct one. On the contrary, Ciliberto consciously enters the debate over the need for a new humanism; he indeed states explicitly at the end of the foreword of the book that the aim of this work is to make an ethical-political proposal,[9] that is, to resume, in the present-day situation, the typical reflections that humanism entertains about the human condition and human destiny, including the tension between disenchantment and utopia and the link between theory and the praxis of reform. The specific feature of Ciliberto's proposal, in this debate, is that he advocates a resumption of humanistic thought in its historical richness, without excluding the disenchantment through which the great thinkers of the age of humanism examined the fragility and weakness of the human condition when it is confronted with unpredictable events. Thus, Ciliberto does not support the resumption of a humanistic ideology which, according to him, belongs irreversibly to the past.

In Ciliberto's book, therefore, historical research and an ethical-political proposal appear to be closely intertwined: the historical presentation of the dramatic aspects of humanism not only overcomes the stereotypically reductive view presented by humanistic ideology, but also makes the ethical-political proposal richer and more complex than the simple reassertion of human dignity and the need to safeguard it.

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[8] Ibid., XI–XII.

[9] Ibid., XII.

2. *Massimo Cacciari's Tragic Humanism*

Two years after the publication of Ciliberto's *Il nuovo Umanesimo*, a book by Massimo Cacciari appeared with the title *La mente inquieta. Saggio sull'Umanesimo* (The Restless Mind: An Essay on Humanism).[10] The two books are closely linked: (1) Cacciari's essay mentions Ciliberto's book,[11] along with many other books by Ciliberto; (2) Ciliberto mentions Cacciari as one of the friends with whom he discussed the topics of his book;[12] (3) a first version of Cacciari's essay had previously been published as an introductory essay, with the title 'Ripensare l'umanesimo' (Rethinking Humanism), in an anthology of writings from the age of humanism entitled *Umanisti italiani. Pensiero e destino* (Italian Humanists: Thought and Destiny), edited by Raphael Ebgi in 2016;[13] in the acknowledgments Ebgi mentions Ciliberto as a scholar whose advice was useful for the book's realisation;[14] moreover, in *Il nuovo umanesimo* Ciliberto states that Ebgi's anthology is among the recent books contributing to a renewed view of humanism.[15]

Beyond these mutual textual references, the primary feature shared by Ciliberto's and Cacciari's books regards their view of the age of humanism as an age of crisis, transformation, and uncertainty, characterised by the awareness that the ancient order of the world is ending and by the need to establish a different

[10] Massimo Cacciari, *La mente inquieta. Saggio sull'Umanesimo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2019).
[11] Ibid., 32 (fn. 5).
[12] Ciliberto, *Il nuovo umanesimo*, XII.
[13] Raphael Ebgi, *Umanisti italiani* (Torino: Einaudi, 2016). The anthology was reprinted in 2022 in paperback by the same publisher; however, Cacciari's essay is not included and has been replaced with an introduction by Raphael Ebgi, which did not appear in the first edition of the book. The last pages of this new introduction are devoted to a short review of books about humanism which had been published since the first edition of *Umanisti italiani;* here both Cacciari's *La mente inquieta* and Ciliberto's *Il nuovo umanesimo* are mentioned and briefly presented (see p. XXII of the 2022 edition).
[14] Ebgi, *Umanisti italiani* (2016 edition), CIV or Ebgi, *Umanisti italiani* (2022 edition), XXVI.
[15] Ciliberto, *Il nuovo umanesimo*, 49 (fn. 56). As a consequence of the publishing history of these books, it is clear that, if we followed a chronological order, Cacciari's essay (in its first version, with respect to which the changes introduced in the 2019 book are nonetheless minimal, and affect almost exclusively the footnotes) and Ebgi's anthology should be presented before Ciliberto's book. My aim, however, is not to follow a chronological order to show the development of a certain image of historical humanism, but to reflect on the role and the relevance that the knowledge of historical humanism in its multiple facets can have for present-day debates about the need for a new humanism. For this reason, Ciliberto's book, which expressly asks this question (which is not explicitly present in Cacciari's essay), has to be my point of departure.

order.[16] Consequently, Cacciari depicts (as does Ciliberto) a humanism that is clearly gloomier than the more typical depictions — which is to say, the views centred on the faith in beauty and the confidence in the creative abilities of the human being.[17]

A central topic in Cacciari's book, besides the view of humanism as an age of crisis and transformation, is the *philosophical* relevance of humanism and its authors. Cacciari takes issue with the many interpretations that recognise humanism's fundamental relevance to the history of art and literature, and perhaps also to the history of philology, but deny its relevance to philosophy and to its history. Cacciari deals with this topic above all in the first of the book's five chapters. Here Cacciari states that, despite the fundamental studies by Eugenio Garin, Cesare Vasoli, and their 'schools', a certain mistrust towards humanism persists on the part of contemporary philosophy.[18] He examines a number of interpretations of humanism which provide negative or belittling evaluations of this historical period's cultural products and their philosophical relevance. Among the authors of such interpretations, Cacciari mentions philosophers like Giovanni Gentile and Ernst Cassirer, or historians of the culture of humanism like Paul Oskar Kristeller and Ernst Robert Curtius; however, he gives the most attention to Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, according to whom humanists have relevance neither for philosophy nor (except, maybe, Lorenzo Valla) for philology.[19] Cacciari pays particular attention to this judgement for two reasons: the first is that this negative judgement concerning both humanistic philosophy and humanistic philology can be read as a confirmation of the strong relationship that, according to Cacciari, links philosophy and philology in humanistic thought — thus, Wilamowitz's denial of the philosophical relevance of humanism implies a denial of its relevance to philology and vice versa. The second reason, which is perhaps more important for Cacciari's book as a whole, and is certainly more important for my reflections in this essay, is that mentioning this judgement gives Cacciari the opportunity to introduce a reflection about the relationship between humanism and German *Humanismus* (of which Wilamowitz is one of the main representatives), which from the 19th Century

[16] In his insightful article 'Crisi e renovatio: pensare l'umanesimo oggi' (Crisis and *Renovatio:* Thinking Humanism Today) (*Pandora Rivista*, 30th August 2019, https://www.pandorarivista.it/articoli/pensare-umanesimo-oggi/), Gio Maria Tessarollo also points out some differences, above all regarding chronology. As we have already seen at the beginning of this essay, Ciliberto's anthology includes many texts by authors from the entire 16th Century, and even the beginning of the 17th (like Paolo Sarpi or Tommaso Campanella), or by non-Italian authors (like Michel de Montaigne, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Martin Luther), whereas Cacciari's book is more strictly devoted to the Italian context of the 14th and especially 15th Centuries up through the first two or three decades of the 16th.

[17] For some examples of these more usual views of humanism, see Cacciari, *La mente inquieta*, 5–7 (and above all the quotation from Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf's *Geschichte der Philologie* at p. 6).

[18] Cacciari, *La mente inquieta*, 3.

[19] Ibid., 6–7.

to the end of the Weimar Republic advocated the return to an education founded on the classic authors of Greek culture as an antidote to the evils of modernity, and above all to modern individualism. Cacciari argues that one of the roots of contemporary philosophy's misunderstanding of the relevance of humanism for philosophy is the projection (which according to Cacciari appears, for example, in Thomas Mann and Martin Heidegger) of the features of this *Humanismus* on humanism. Cacciari states that 'the conservative spirit, the essentially anti-tragic view of life, the ideal of an all-encompassing harmonic *paideia*, which constitute the soul and the longing of *Humanismus*'[20] are projected onto humanism. Consequently, all criticisms of German *Humanismus* have been regarded as decisive arguments against humanism, and even the historical failure of *Humanismus* during the age of world wars and fascisms has been seen as a failure of humanism itself. Cacciari, on the contrary, advocates a clear awareness of the distance between humanism, with its restlessness and its tragic view of the human condition, and German *Humanismus*. This awareness allies with the recognition of the authentic philosophical relevance of humanistic thought.

Although Cacciari aims to overcome the more usual views of humanism, he takes into consideration the features of that age's culture which are most relevant in the traditional or didactic presentations of humanism, and points out that even these features imply an authentic philosophical reflection: (1) the new interest of humanists in language, and above all in Latin, accompanied by a flourishing of studies on the culture, literature, architecture and figurative arts of ancient times and by a renewal of the arts, which is nourished by these studies on ancient times, would be impossible without a philosophy of language; (2) the assertion of human dignity and of the creative abilities of the human being implies a philosophical anthropology. Cacciari in fact devotes the second and third chapters of the book to the humanistic philosophy of language, and the fourth and fifth to humanistic philosophical anthropology.

As concerns the humanistic philosophy of language in connection with the problems of philology, Cacciari's reflections primarily highlight the fact that the *renovatio* which humanists continually advocate is also a *renovatio* of antiquity; however, we have to understand this *renovatio* of antiquity as an endeavour whose goal is not to bring antiquity back to life, but to awaken present times through a recourse to antiquity.[21] Humanism, indeed, fights the mere imitation of ancient works and instead uses the literature, architecture, art, and even the politics of antiquity as a model (or as a collection of *exempla*) to give voice to contemporary times, to their dramas and to their needs. The great appreciation which humanists have for Latin does not serve the imitation of classic authors; the Latin of classic authors, on the contrary, is taken as the model of an expressive power and a rigour which can renew the use of Latin in the age in which humanists live, but can also

[20] Ibid., 13.
[21] Ibid., 15.

be transferred into the vernacular. For this reason, Cacciari devotes the second chapter of the book mainly to Dante's search for a *vulgare illustre* (an 'illustrious vernacular', for which Latin has to be a model), and to the relevance that Dante's reflections on language had for humanism. In connection with this topic, Cacciari emphasises the relevance of poetry for the foundation of a language: illustrious vernacular can arise only in poetry: thus, the reflections on language are indissolubly linked to those on art.

The topics of the third chapter are more varied: with reference to different authors of humanism and to several particular topics, Cacciari continues to reflect on how humanism viewed antiquity as a relevant model for the present day or as a means for its awakening. Among these particular topics, the most notable theme concerns the way in which humanistic philology is enlightened by the awareness or by the discovery that every single word of every single language contains and reveals the history of entire eras.[22] This philology, therefore, 'has in itself the germ, and more than the germ, of any future hermeneutics'.[23] Considerations of this kind show the fundamental philosophical relevance of the philology of humanism.

The last two chapters, as we have already seen, are devoted to humanistic philosophical anthropology. Here Cacciari distinguishes two currents in humanistic thought: the main representatives of the first, which has its roots in Petrarch, are Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo Valla, and Niccolò Machiavelli. The core of their anthropology, to which the fourth chapter is devoted, is that nature requires everything to be always in motion,[24] and this restlessness is above all a feature of the human being, of its life and of its mind (this is the reason why Cacciari entitles his book, *La mente inquieta*, using a phrase which he takes from the poem *De rerum natura* by Lucretius, whose work was so important for humanistic culture).[25] No stability, no rest can be given to human beings. And while Petrarch claims that one can overcome this human condition through religion, conversion, charity, and divine Grace, the opportunity to stem this restlessness through religion fades in the more secular view of the aforementioned authors of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries. Their answer to the restlessness or to the misery that is a part of human nature can only be to accept this human condition, to bear it, and even to embrace it, making the best out of it in light of the awareness that this instability, while certainly destructive, is also the root of all the works of the arts and the sciences.

The second current, to which the last chapter is devoted, is Florentine Neoplatonism, represented primarily by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. Cacciari aims to show that this current's view of the human condition, as expressed for example in Pico's famous *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, is not so distant — as it might appear at first sight — from the other current's view. As is well known,

[22] Ibid., 44.
[23] Ibid., 35.
[24] Ibid., 57.
[25] Ibid., 60.

according to the *Oratio,* the human being has no essence of its own and can become whatever it wants or chooses to be. This, as Cacciari shows, clearly implies the danger of dispersion, of a vacuous and restless passing from one state to another. However, this current distinguishes itself from the former by its conviction that from this human condition of restlessness it is possible to ascend toward the divine and true peace. From this follows the need to determine which doctrine truly points out the way for this ascent. This need, in the context of humanism, implies a reflection on the possibility of a reconciliation between the philosophical positions that shaped the culture of the age: is it possible to find an agreement between the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle? And are these doctrines compatible with Christian revelation? The most radical answer to these questions, but perhaps also the most consistent with the anthropology of this current, is that each era, each culture, each language and therefore each doctrine gives voice only to one among the infinite possibilities of the human being.[26] It therefore seems that it is not possible to find peace and a remedy for dispersion in a single doctrine, and that the only way is to know them all and compare them; for this reason, in this chapter, Cacciari emphasises the relevance of Pico's *Conclusiones nongentae*, a work in which this comparison is actually carried out. Cacciari's gloss is that here we have a way of thinking peace as the unity of a multiplicity, not as a unity which cancels multiplicity.

3. *Conclusions*

We can now draw some conclusions from the comparison of these two books. The first conclusion is that these books, which are — as we have seen — so strictly connected, give us two presentations of the culture and philosophy of humanism: these not only differ from more traditional presentations but are, in a certain way, both similar to each other and also complementary. Ciliberto proposes his view of humanism in a radical way, even running the risk of confronting the typically one-sided view with its extreme and similarly one-sided opposite. Cacciari's presentation, on the contrary, reveals how the aspects of humanistic culture generally considered to be the primary ones in all the traditional and didactic presentations of this age can be re-integrated into the overall view which Cacciari shares with Ciliberto: the humanistic passion for antiquity and for the problems of language and philology can be fully understood only in relation to the humanistic longing for reform, a *renovatio;* even the celebration of human dignity in Pico's *Oratio* has a tragic side and is not lacking in disenchantment.

The second conclusion concerns the different aims which Cacciari and Ciliberto have in their presentations of humanism: Ciliberto's aim is not merely to give a new presentation of humanism, but to make an ethical-political proposal for

[26] Ibid., 80.

the present. Cacciari, on the other hand, makes no such statement in his book: his explicit aim is just historical reconstruction and interpretation. Nonetheless, we can say that whatever the aim of his work may be, his reflections can clearly be integrated into Ciliberto's ethical-political proposal: his reconstruction of the main aspects of humanistic culture can contribute to that restoration of a correct view of historical humanism which, according to Ciliberto, is necessary for a new humanism; moreover, the main reason why Cacciari's book can be read in light of present-day questions and Ciliberto's ethical-political proposal is his sharp opposition to the way in which the features of German *Humanismus*, with its anti-tragic view of life and its ideal of an all-encompassing harmonic *paideia*, have been projected onto humanism. This is a specific example of the irreducibility of humanism to humanistic ideology, to use Ciliberto's terminology. German *Humanismus* is indeed a paradigmatic embodiment of the humanistic ideology, perhaps the embodiment which, more than any other, is at the root of the typical views of humanism which are rejected both by Cacciari and by Ciliberto. Thus, Cacciari's reflections on the relation between humanism and German *Humanismus* are, beyond their expressed intentions, a significant contribution to the distinction between humanistic ideology and humanism not only from the point of view of historical reconstruction and interpretation, but also in view of a possible new humanism.

A third and perhaps more important conclusion concerns Ciliberto's ethical-political proposal, or better, how his reflections on the need for a new humanism might be relevant today to those who, under the banner of a 'new humanism', advocate a radical reassertion of human dignity and its safeguard against the dehumanising practices of our times, but do not share Ciliberto's conviction that this reassertion is ideological and thus belongs irreversibly to the past. In this regard, one may suspect that Ciliberto's proposal is completely heterogeneous to those endeavours and does not really concern them; as such, Ciliberto's book could not actually intervene in contemporary debates about a new humanism and would remain outside them.

Certainly, Ciliberto advocates for an understanding of humanism that differs from the one typically found in debates about new humanism; however, the claim that his stance could not actually intervene in these debates is superficial. Ciliberto's book indeed shows us that any longing for a new humanism must confront the historical richness of humanism in all its aspects. Ciliberto's presentation of humanistic thought as a thought which develops in a context of crisis and as a reflection on this crisis, and which is characterised by a tension between disenchantment and utopia, should urge people who advocate a renewed recognition of human dignity not to embrace an exclusively positive view of the human being: an attitude consonant with the reduction of historical humanism to its caricature. People who advocate a radical reassertion of human dignity and its safeguard should not forget that reflecting on the human condition implies a reflection on the limits of the human being, on its dark sides, on the mystery of

evil; they should also not forget that it is simply not enough to take a stand against the crises and the transformations that we face and currently live through (the crises that make a new humanism appear necessary); one must try to understand the causes and the roots of these crises and transformations. Ciliberto and Cacciari offer the reader a number of suggestions as to how we might take up that task.

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