HUMANISM

Tony Davies

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Seemingly an appeal to simple, shared humanity, humanism has proved over the last 200 years one of the most contentious and divisive of concepts. It has provoked a succession of bitter altercations and engages with some of the profoundest themes - religious, sexual, political - of modern life and thought. Starting with the 19th-century educationalists and historians, this study traces the emergence of the figure of Man in the writings of the humanists of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the freethinkers and philosophies of the 17th and 18th centuries. It explores the issues at stake in the encounters between humanism and a succession of intransigent anti-humanisms.

Humanism Details

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From Reader Review Humanism for online ebook

J. Watson (aka umberto) says

Focusing on literary studies/cultural studies, this book should be "essential for anyone approaching the study of humanism, post-modernism or cultural theory" (back cover). From its five chapters, the author has told us not to read them respectively, rather he said, "The sequence of the chapters that follow - … - may look eccentric; and it might seem that a reader hoping for a straight-forward chronological narrative would do better to start at the end, then read chapter 3 and 4, before turning back finally to the first two." (pp. 6-7) However, I found reading them as advised still tough due to 'humanism' itself but kept going because "the term has been adopted for a variety of cultural and political purposes and contexts. Reactions against humanism have contributed to movements such as structuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism." (back cover)

Kaan says

I appreciate the effort that went into this book, but as someone who is learning philosophy casually, this book is just too academic for me. If you are someone who's studying philosophy at university, I'm sure you can make more use of this book than I could.

One thing that's interesting is that this book doesn't follow a sequence, it's divided into five parts but the first two chapters talk about 18-20th-century humanism, the next two chapters talk about the origins of it, and the last chapter is about modern humanism. The author mentions at the beginning that you can read in any order you want, but it just seems... unnecessary.

Not a bad book by any means (it simply means that I'm the stupid one), but if you're a casual like me, you'd probably be better off reading the original works of humanist writers such as Erasmus and Moore than starting with this book straight away.

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johan _5179 says

Clear, concise and easy to read and follow,Davies' 'Humanism' tackles the complex issue of finding some coherence in the homogenous baggage which the word Humanism carries. Davies looks at the issue from multiple perspectives of history, philosophy and politics. All in all, it is a very good book for a student, and is highly recommended to one and all.

Joshua says

This book is an investigation of the usage of the word "humanism" throughout history. It helps people to understand movements like anti-humanism and to be able to make sense of why terms like that can identify people who are still very much "humanistic" given the contemporary usage of the term.