Humanism and Enlightenment

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Abstract Some authors argue that digital transformation is a form of "counter-Enlightenment." And indeed, there is a tendency of transhumanist and anti-humanist thought in present-day debates around digitalization. Software systems are described as if they were persons endowed with mental states and moral or immoral attitudes. For some, the values of humanism and Enlightenment that framed human rights and democratic constitutions have become obsolete. In fact, humans are delegating responsibility to artificial intelligence and digital tools. Simultaneously, digitalization can lead to a greater emphasis on humans as rational beings and grant them greater freedom for personal development. Therefore, the question "What is the relevance of humanism and Enlightenment in the era of digital transformation?" arises and more basically "What are the constitutive elements of humanism and Enlightenment and are they still relevant, or do they even gain importance in digital transformation processes?". These and other questions will be addressed in this chapter.

1   Introduction

As a result of increasing digitalization, humans are handing over more and more responsibility to artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools, e.g., in the field of autonomous driving, applicant tracking software, or creditworthiness rating. For this reason, some speak of a so-called counter-Enlightenment. But in contrast to this trend, digital transformation can strengthen the ideals of the Enlightenment and humanism and help humans to achieve more freedom, use of reason, and responsibility—Enlightenment 2.0, so to speak. To shed light on this interplay, we

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will explain the interdependence between humanism and the Enlightenment in this chapter. This is important to understand the foundations of Digital Humanism in general. In this regard, this chapter is, in a sense, fundamental, because it deals with the foundation of humanism itself (in relation to the Enlightenment).

For this purpose, the first step is to highlight the extent to which the Enlightenment is relevant in the age of AI and increasing digitalization. In the second step, the foundations of humanism as such are presented, before humanism and the Enlightenment are interconnected in the third step. In particular, the following questions are especially relevant: What unites them? How are they mutually dependent? And why, even in the digital age, can't they be considered separate from each other? As a result, it turns out that the human capacity to give and take reasons is what leads to freedom and responsibility in the first place. Humanistic ideals firmly shaped by the Enlightenment, and vice versa, are decisive for the fact that we regard all people as free and equal and grant them human rights—regardless of skin color, religion, race, or nationality. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Enlightenment and humanism and to understand their respective relevance to Digital humanism.

2   Digitalization: Age of the Enlightenment 2.0 or the Counter-Enlightenment?

AI is spreading more and more into areas that have been exclusively human domains. The fact that AI can help with train schedules or weather forecasts is beneficial—and usually unproblematic. But the use of AI is more problematic when it affects the core of humanity—at least from a philosophical-humanistic point of view: the use of reason. And what could better enlighten us about this than the Enlightenment itself?

Speaking of the Enlightenment in the context of AI and digitalization is not a new idea: Therefore, it is obvious that not only the EU is concerned with the problem of "Artificial Intelligence in Europe: In the Spirit of Enlightenment" (Federal Foreign Office, 2020) but that AI is today often understood as a challenge for philosophical-humanistic thinking: It is necessary to design AI processes responsibly and in terms of human authorship (see chapter by Nida-Rümelin and Staudacher)—in the enlightened sense—at least insofar as they affect the realm of the use of reason. The premise that must underlie this process of change is the ambivalence of the relationship between the Enlightenment and AI.

On the one hand, the Enlightenment ideal of sapere aude ("dare to know") encourages innovation and progress in the areas of AI through the boundless optimism it engenders with respect to science, technology, and creativity; following in its footsteps, numerous contemporary subfields of AI research can be understood as direct continuations of this ideal and the resulting achievements (Barthelmeß & Furbach, 2023; De Lamotte, 2020; Lewin et al., 2022; Helbing, 2018). For example,

the idea of a strong, sui generis autonomous AI originated from the intellectual analogy between human thought and technical intelligence—the computer animistically exaggerated as a superhuman homunculus. Chatbots are another example. The idea of technological innovation of the Enlightenment and the resulting mode of science can be placed in a quasi-direct tradition.

On the other hand, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (2002) already referred in 1944 to the dialectic inherent in the Enlightenment, which opposes progress and the resulting control of humans over humanity and nature with highly destructive potential. Applied to the research field of AI, this dialectical approach gains significance besides the blessings of modernity, as AI can lead to a triumphant disaster for humans and nature (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). Horkheimer, for example, links the progress of technology with an inherent process of dehumanization. For him, the innovation process of technology could weaken what it actually wants to strengthen: the idea of the human being as such (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2005; Noeri & Jephcott, 2002; Schmidt, 1998; Bus et al., 2012).

Examples can be given to illustrate this: At times, for example, AI-driven job application tools result in unintended automated discrimination against female applicants,[1] self-driving cars cause fatal accidents,[2] the use of facial recognition software leads to discrimination against people of color,[3] or autonomous weapons systems accidentally kill civilians.[4] The list can be continued at any length. But all examples have one thing in common: digital tools and AI were applied to save time, relieve the workload of humans, or simplify processes. By doing so, technology can lead unintentionally to discrimination or other negative consequences for people.

Therefore, we must proactively shape the age of AI and digitalization in an enlightened sense and with the help of humanistic ideals. This is the only way to create a desirable future for people and the world—both digital and analog.

In order to get a deeper understanding of this, we must begin with a comprehension of what precisely humanism is and where the term originated. This will now be done in the next section.

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[1] This is what happened in 2015 when an Amazon algorithm systematically discriminated against women by excluding them from technical job application processes. The gender bias was discovered only after the algorithm had already been widely used. The cause of the given gender bias was the data used for training (Kodyan, 2019).

[2] In May 2016, a fatal crash involving an autonomously driving Tesla car occurred (Banks et al. (2018) provide a clear and well-founded explanation of how this could have happened and what needs to be done to prevent it from happening in the future).

[3] In 2018, a Google image recognition software mistakenly "confused" black people with apes. Google was helpless in facing this highly discriminatory incident. The only quick response that prevented such discrimination was blocking some words entirely (Hilale, 2021).

[4] Leveringhaus (2016) provides a useful overview of the debate on automated weapons systems.

3 What Does Humanism Mean and Where Does the Term Come From?

Humanism is derived from the Latin word *humanitas*, which means "humanity." Humanism generally refers to a mental condition or attitude. A person with a humanistic mindset respects the dignity of every human being. They strive for a life without violence, in which everyone is free to express their opinions. The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), a non-governmental organization that advocates for human rights and is inspired by secular humanist ideas, defines humanism as follows:

> Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. (Copson, 2015, pp. 5–6)

The term "humanism" refers to a wide variety of occurrences. Hence, it is used to designate an epoch, such as Italian Renaissance humanism [inspired by Francesco Petrarca (Mann, 1996, p. 8)] in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but also German New humanism (Neuhumanismus) in the nineteenth century. Renaissance humanism was a broad educational movement that drew on ancient ideas. Renaissance humanists anticipated that the utmost human potential would be realized by combining knowledge and virtue. Humanistic education was intended to enable humans to recognize their true destiny and, by imitating classical models, to produce an ideal humanity and to shape an appropriate form of society. The humanistic conception of life, which adopted the ancient Roman notion of humanitas, was an alternative to the traditional view inherited from the Middle Ages, which was heavily focused on God and the afterlife. The humanists of the Renaissance distinguished themselves sharply from the Scholastics of the later Middle Ages. Johann Gottfried von Herder initiated German New humanism, which was continued by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1963) (creator of the modern Gymnasium (high school) system and founder of the University of Berlin), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (e.g., with his play "Iphigenia in Tauris" (1966)), and Friedrich Schiller (e.g., with his ode "To Joy"), among others.

Fascinatingly, based on German New humanism, idealistic philosophy arose (key figures in this regard were Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, and Friedrich Schleiermacher), resulting in a new "worldview" (Wilhelm von Humboldt). From a historical standpoint, humanism is extremely diverse. Therefore, there is no unique definition of humanism per se (Davies, 2008, pp. 3–5). Humanism was and remains controversial. On the one hand, humanist perspectives and their opponents engage in heated debates. On the other hand, even within the humanist spectrum, consensus is rare. The positions range

from anti-clerical materialism[5] to religious humanism,[6] utopian humanism,[7] existentialism,[8] and Marxism.[9] Nevertheless, despite the differences and criticisms, there are fundamental values and ideals that have always been associated with humanism and have influenced humanist thought since its beginnings. According to Davies (2008), they all share a common trait: admiration for the Greek language and culture. Hegel, Humboldt, Goethe, and Schiller, for instance, believed that the Hellenistic ideal did not belong solely in history books. They all saw the future in the Greek language and Greek culture (especially for modern Germany), and they desired to create a "better" cultivated, rational, modern Greece (Davies, 2008, p. 11).

Now that we have briefly discussed the origins of humanism as a concept and the history of the term, the following question arises: Why is it so important to discuss humanist ideals and values in the age of AI and digitalization? Isn't it already obsolete? What does "Digital humanism" precisely mean, and why is it so important? The following section will address these questions, among others.

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[5] Brown and Ladyman (2020) provide a comprehensive overview of the history of materialism. And Moir (2020) decisively addresses Bloch's speculative materialism.

[6] As Hall (2006) acknowledges, the word combination "religious Humanism" seems to be a contradiction in itself, but it is not at all. Don Cupitt, one of the leading apologists of religious Humanism defines God as: "the sum of our values, representing to us their ideal unity, their claims upon us and their creative power" (Cupitt, 1984, p. 269). Following the religious humanist position, religious values are placed in relation to human life in symbolic and actual form. Cupitt (1982, 1984) suggests reading Kierkegaard to illustrate this. Kierkegaard makes it his task to explain the human reality of life from within. In doing so, he does not have to aim at metaphysical spheres that lie outside this reality. Rather, it is sufficient to explore the values, the inner logic, and the conditions of the realm of life. But this method, which works so well and is mutually consistent, eventually encounters the problem that it is caught in a circular argument. This circular argument can only be resolved by what Kierkegaard (2013) means by his irrational "leap of faith". In the current debate, religious Humanism plays a subordinate role and can be neglected in the further course of this contribution (Hall, 2006, p. 69).

[7] As already shown, Humanism emerged from the social, political, and philosophical shifts of the Renaissance. As Berriel (2022) states the humanist conception of the world proved to be extremely promising: Humanists do not see themselves simply as products of a given nature, but rather as authors or creators of their own existence, as architects of the world they inhabit. This attitude is partly accompanied by utopian and dystopian ideals. The striving for something new, something better, something greater drives numerous thinkers, e.g., Picodella Mirandola (1987), Thomas Morus (1979), Ernst Bloch (1986), or Herbert Marcuse (1969, 1991) and even today, Humanism is partly the foundation stone for critical thinking on the one hand and imaginative projections on the other (Berriel, 2022, pp. 301–302).

[8] Already Sartre made in 1948 the reference between Existentialism and Humanism. Existentialist and humanist theories take many different positions and directions, as pointed out by Spinelli (1989, 2012) and Wong (2006). Hoffman et al. (2019) present the contemporary trends of existential-humanistic psychotherapy, whereby these trends are not shown in a Eurocentric way, but rather also under multicultural and Asian aspects. It is shown that relevant foundations of Humanism and existentialism can also be found in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Likewise, van Deurzen (2019) provides interesting Existential-Humanistic and Existential-Integrative Therapy aspects.

[9] In the 2008 publication on the 125th anniversary of Karl Marx's death, I elaborate on the humanistic content of Marx's thought and relate it to a widely anti-humanistic practice of Marxist-minded politics (Nida-Rümelin, 2008).

4   Education as a Humanistic Ideal Has Two Components: One Theoretical and One Practical

Now that we have illustrated how humanism can be interpreted differently and how it can generate controversy, the following question arises: What unites the various humanist perspectives and movements, and what makes the term "Digital humanism" unique? It is the concept of human authorship and the related human capacity to give reasons, freedom, and responsibility (Nida-Rümelin & Weidenfeld, 2022). Fundamentally, we interpret "Digital humanism" in terms of a realistic view of AI and digitalization, on the one hand, and an increase in human responsibility, on the other. In this way, human authorship will be strengthened, while innovation will be encouraged:[10]

> [Digital humanism] sharpens the criteria of human responsibility in the face of the availability of digital technologies, calls for an expansion of the ascription of responsibility to communication and interaction mediated by digital technologies, and does not allow the actual agents (and that is us humans) to duck away and pass responsibility on to a supposed autonomy of digital machines. (Nida-Rümelin, 2022, p. 74)

Since chapters by Nida-Rümelin and Staudacher, Nida-Rümelin and Winter, and Werthner deal with the foundations of Digital humanism and this chapter is meant to address the relationship between the Enlightenment and humanism, this section will now concentrate on the two distinct components of humanism. This is essential for understanding the big picture.

Every humanistic epoch in history, whether in Europe, China, India, or elsewhere, has emphasized the potential for human self-development (Weiming & Ikeda, 2011). The ancient world's intellectuals, such as Confucius, Buddha, and Socrates, shared the belief that humans are responsible for themselves and others and are capable of developing their potential through education, empathy, and solidarity. This explains the importance of education in humanism (Veugelers, 2011). In this regard, education has a dual function: education as self-education and education as an equal opportunity for all. In this view, humanism has both a theoretical and a practical aspect.

The theoretical one is expressed in humanistic anthropology, according to which people can be affected by reasons. Thus, reasons exert more than a simple causal effect on human behavior. In fact, it is a central tenet of humanism that if humans seek the truth, they must rely on science and logic (Law, 2013). In interpersonal communication, humans weigh reasons, deliberate, debate, and give and take reasons for this reason. Affiliation and participation teach us which reasons are compelling and which are less compelling. In social interaction and communication, reasons are recognized and exchanged. That is what makes reasons effective. Humans are essentially social beings.

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[10] Nida-Rümelin (2022) and Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld (2022) give a comprehensive account of what can be understood by Digital humanism in a philosophical framework.

However, according to evolutionary psychology, self-efficacy, along with attachment, is the second fundamental driver of human behavior: "Self-efficacy expectation is the belief by an individual that they are able to perform a specific behavior. Whether or not this behavior is expected to generate specific outcomes is conceptualized as response-outcome expectations" (Lippke, 2020, pp. 4722–4723).

Consequently, the pragmatic aspect of education as a humanistic ideal pertains to our actions: Through our actions, we affect the world; we do not merely react to external influences. We exert influence in the world through our actions, which presupposes that we have action options and necessitates that we accept responsibility for these actions. Without the ability to act rationally, there would be no accountability. Without the ability to choose, the weighing of pros and cons would be meaningless. Freedom and responsibility are interdependent and based on the human capacity to be influenced by motives (Schweiker, 2004).[11]

The humanistic view of education is grounded in the anthropology of equality and freedom. It focuses on the development of the personality rather than the training of specific abilities and skills; it is less concerned with the acquisition of information and more concerned with the power of judgment; it is less concerned with knowledge and more concerned with a deeper understanding of contexts; independent thought takes precedence over reception. Through education, people should be enabled to make their own judgments and responsible decisions, i.e., they should be educated in responsible theory and practice. The focus is on self-education and determining one's own course in life, not on training and imitation. To quote Aung (2020):

> According to the humanists, education should be a process of developing a free, self-actualizing person [. . .]. Because the goal of humanism is a completely autonomous person, education should be without coercion or perception. Students should be active and should be encouraged to make their own choices. The teacher who follows humanistic theory emphasizes instruction and assessment based on students, abilities, and needs. Humanists honor divergent thinking. (Aung, 2020, p. 13557)

This ideal of humanistic education is largely independent of the specific subject matter. As stated previously, both Italian Renaissance humanism and German New humanism placed a significant emphasis on understanding Greek culture and speaking ancient Greek (Moss, 1999, p. 145). The enthusiasm for Greece among modern humanists, which has lost its formative power only since the end of the twentieth century, was predicated on the belief that the texts and other cultural evidence of Greek classicism and Hellenism conveyed profound humanistic insights that could only be acquired through a deeper understanding of ancient Greek culture and language. This has led to humanism being accused of elitism, which, despite being incompatible with the inclusive and universalistic educational ideals of humanist philosophy, was justified by educational practice. Humanistic thought and practice

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[11] Due to the limited scope and overview character of this chapter, it is not feasible to go into more depth here. But the term pair freedom and responsibility carries a long tradition in philosophy. Cf. inter alia Kilanowski (2022), Nelkin (2013), and Bok (2022).

can be gleaned from a variety of sources, including the Greek Classics, Hellenism, and the Roman Stoa, but also from Confucian, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and other cultural perspectives. Alternatively, by reading and contemplating contemporary philosophical texts, American Pragmatism, particularly that of John Dewey (Dewey, 1974; Snaza, 2017), also contributed to humanistic thought and educational practice.

The concept of human self-development is central to all humanistic approaches to education and politics. In this way, humanistic politics, theory, and practice are distinguished by combining the concepts of self-development and equality: individuals are equally empowered to shape their own lives. They, therefore, possess equal human dignity. This universal conception of equality encompasses all individuals, regardless of origin, skin color, gender, culture, background, status, income, or influence. This humanistic principle of equality comes into conflict with hierarchical, patriarchal, racist, nationalist, autocratic, and capitalist societies. These societies do not recognize the equal human dignity, respect, and recognition that each individual deserves. Following this clarification of the most significant humanistic theoretical and practical principles, we will now, as a final step, explain why humanism is so crucial to the Enlightenment.

5   Why Is the Enlightenment so Important for Humanism?

The humanist project flourished during the Age of Enlightenment, but it was also challenged by scientism and utopian ideals. According to David Hume and Immanuel Kant, the proofs of God from the medieval-modern period are no longer persuasive. Hume and Kant consider the triumph of science over religion to be conclusive evidence that metaphysics can no longer be rationally supported since only the realm of concrete experience can serve as a foundation for valid philosophical conclusions (Tarnas, 1991).

Already with Hume, but especially in France and Germany, the forced rationalism of M. de Voltaire and the Physiocrats (a French economic theory developed during the Age of Enlightenment) begins to crumble. A new perspective on emotional life emerges. The static order thinking of the Middle Ages no longer dictates the way of thinking; instead, a new perception of the world and the self-reflection of the observing individual emerge (Böning, 2015, p. 58).

While humanism emphasizes human self-development, the Enlightenment emphasizes the rationality of thought and action. Reason replaces prejudice. The purpose of scientific knowledge is to counteract the influence of superstition and religion and provide a clear perspective on the world. The Enlightenment has a positive outlook on progress and relies on science. These, however, are the two sides of the same coin: It can result in dangerous outcomes, such as scientism (LeDrew, 2013), the belief that only the sciences can lead to rational knowledge and practice and that the world can be shaped by scientific and technical criteria.

However, both science and democracy are products of the Enlightenment; both are founded on faith in human reason. In the case of science, this is a specialized and methodologically driven endeavor that necessitates specialized knowledge. In the case of democracy, it is not specialized, but inclusive, accessible to all citizens, and open to the public. Consequently, science and democracy are in conflict. Science's findings and the implementation of these findings have a significant impact on democratically shaped development. These can only be effective if they play a role in the public sphere and are incorporated into political practice. Science must transform its specialized knowledge into knowledge that is democratically relevant and be willing to articulate it publicly. As essential as the Enlightenment is to the humane shaping of human living conditions, it must avoid becoming hypertrophic and underestimating the rational possibilities for shaping natural living conditions and human society, thereby descending into technicalism, utopianism, and social technology. The standard will always be humanity, the humane shaping of human conditions, and the formation of human authorship within the ecological constraints (Nida-Rümelin, 2010).

Humanism and Enlightenment are rejected by opponents who are more or less radical. In the course of human history, humanism and Enlightenment principles have dominated only rarely, while power, oppression, and the cynical instrumentalization of human beings for economic or political ends have dominated far more frequently.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948, the vast majority of world society has agreed on a humanistic foundation of human rights that is accepted declaratively but frequently violated in political, economic, and social practice. Those who act contrary to the humanist ethos of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the humanist-inspired fundamental rights in state constitutions seek to counter the universalist ethos of human rights with ideologies that are incompatible with the above-described understanding of humanism: ideologies of the superiority of one ethnicity or race, class, or gender, collectivist ideologies in which the rights of the individual do not matter, nationalist ideologies of the superiority of one's own nation over others, social Darwinist ideologies of the survival of the fittest, clericalist ideologies with the aim of establishing a God State, and many others. Humanist thought and practice contrast this with the universality and consistency of the human condition. It appeals to human reason, scientific rationality, and responsible political practice in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Humanism is dependent upon education, cooperation, and comprehension. And it presupposes that human rights are equally valid regardless of affiliation. In political, social, economic, technical, and cultural practice, the humanistic theory demonstrates its validity. It seeks to improve the global conditions for human self-development.

6 Conclusions

It is crucial to discuss humanism and the Enlightenment in the age of AI and expanding digitalization. The ideal of education stands in the forefront: humanism and the Enlightenment are based on philosophical and anthropological assumptions, but they are realized in educational practice, politics, and the formation of social relations, as we have discovered. Humanists of all eras believed that participation and equality could be achieved through education. Therefore, they believed that the state had a responsibility to provide equal, but not uniform, educational opportunities for everyone. However, the equal ability to live a life of dignity and to develop individually and collectively also requires empathy and solidarity. When people become existentially dependent due to external circumstances, such as unemployment, illness, or old age, they lose their status as life's authors.

Humanism, when properly understood, does not occur in the ivory tower. As a result, unlike almost all other philosophical currents, philosophical humanism has a political dimension: to shape the condition so as to enable equal human dignity, equal respect, equal recognition, and equal capacity for life authorship. Therefore, in the context of the new fanaticism and fundamentalism, the commercialization and infantilization of Western culture and cultures worldwide, one could argue for a humanistic philosophical and political response (Nida-Rümelin, 2016). In reliance on the universality of human rights, the "Vienna Manifesto on Digital humanism" (2019) is designed to be universally human because it applies to all people and not just a particular elite or privileged economic, social, or cultural group of people.

However, in the age of AI and expanding digitalization, one caveat is essential: This only applies to humans and not to machines (Schmölz, 2020, p. 228). Regardless of how one defines being human, the human being qua human being has rights and freedoms, as well as duties and responsibilities, because freedom, equality, and the responsibility that comes with them—in short, being the author of one's own life—are characteristics that only humans possess and are not applicable to AI, digital tools, etc. Nonetheless, this alleged limitation must not act as an impediment to innovation or a brake. This realistic perspective is meant to propel research, politics, and business forward.

In this way, fundamental humanistic and Enlightenment values are transferred to the digital age, which can lead to innovation and advancement. Nevertheless, it is essential to ensure that the use of AI and digitalization does not result in counter-Enlightenment.

Discussion Questions for Students and Their Teachers
1. What are the fundamental principles of humanism?
2. Why is it impossible to consider humanism without the Enlightenment?
3. What role does science play in relation to the values and ideals of humanism and the Enlightenment?
4. What critiques of humanism exist, and to what extent are they plausible?
5. Does increasing digitalization result in a counter-Enlightenment or Enlightenment 2.0?

Learning Resources for Students

1. Cave, P. (2022) *humanism*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

   As the subtitle "a beginner's guide" puts it, this is a good overview of humanism. Both historically and systematically, one gets a good insight here about what is important.

2. Crosson, J. B. (2021) "humanism and enlightenment" in *The Oxford Handbook of humanism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

   This is the right place to get a deeper insight into the tension between humanism and Enlightenment after this chapter. Does humanism condition the Enlightenment? Or vice versa? Is humanism possible without Enlightenment? What is the relation between the two concepts?

3. Kircher, T. (2021) *Before Enlightenment: Play and Illusion in Renaissance humanism*. Leiden: Brill.

   This work is less specific, and not a typical overview work, but still very much worth reading, also for non-experts: Timothy Kircher argues for new ways of appreciating Renaissance humanist philosophy: The literary qualities of humanists' writings convey how play and illusion helped form their ideas about knowledge, ethics, and metaphysics.

4. Mazzocco, A. (2006) *Interpretations of Renaissance humanism*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

   Authored by some of the most preeminent Renaissance scholars active today, this volume's essays give fresh and illuminating analyses of important aspects of Renaissance humanism, including its origin, connection to the papal court and medieval traditions, classical learning, religious and literary dimensions, and dramatis personae.

5. Mathäs, A. (2020) *Beyond Posthumanism*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

   Read a good overview of posthumanism here: Through insightful analyses of key texts, Alexander Mathäs mounts a broad defense of the humanistic tradition, emphasizing its pursuit of a universal ethics and ability to render human experiences comprehensible through literary imagination.

6. Nida-Rümelin, J. and Weidenfeld, N. (2022) *Digital humanism*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

   The advantage of this book is that it is philosophically sound and yet written in a way that will make it accessible for everybody interested in the subject. Every chapter begins with a film scene illustrating a precise philosophical problem with AI and how we look at it—making the book not only readable but even entertaining. And after having read the book, the reader will have a clear vision of what it means to live in a world where digitalization and AI are central technologies for a better and more humane civilization.

7. Nida-Rümelin, J. (2022) "Digital humanism and the Limits of Artificial Intelligence" in Werthner, H., Prem, E., Lee, E.A., Ghezzi, C. (ed.) *Perspectives on Digital humanism*, Cham: Springer, pp. 71–75.

   This chapter is programmatic in style and content. It describes some patterns and one central argument of that, which I take as the view of digital humanism and which we exposed in *Digital Humanism* (2022). The central argument

regards the critique of strong and weak AI. This chapter does not discuss the logical and metaphysical aspects of digital humanism that I take to be part of the broader context of the theory of reason.

8. Pinker, S. (2019) *Enlightenment now: The case for reason, science, humanism, and progress*. New York: Penguin Books.

   With intellectual depth and literary flair, *Enlightenment Now* makes the case for reason, science, and humanism: the ideals we need to confront our problems and continue our progress.

9. Rüsen, J. (2021) *humanism: Foundations, Diversities, Developments*. London: Routledge.

   The book describes humanism in a systematic and historical perspective. It analyzes its manifestation and function in cultural studies and its role in the present. Within the book, special attention is given to the intention of contemporary humanism to overcome ethno-centric elements in the cultural orientation of contemporary living conditions and to develop humane dimensions of this orientation. This is linked to a fundamental critique of the current posthuman self-understanding of the humanities. Furthermore, the intercultural aspect in the understanding of humanism is emphasized; for non-Western cultures also have their own humanistic traditions. Two further aspects are also addressed: the Holocaust as the most radical challenge to humanistic thinking and the relationship of humanism to nature.

10. Vaughn, L. and Dacey, A. (2003) *The Case for humanism*. Washington: Rowman & Littlefield.

    The Case for Humanism is the premier textbook to introduce and help students think critically about the "big ideas" of Western humanism, secularism, rationalism, materialism, science, democracy, individualism, and others, all powerful themes that run through Western thought from the ancient Greeks and the Enlightenment to the present day.

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