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## **Humanism Revisited.**

For a long while by now, we live in an inflationary world of „-isms“, at least as far as the intellectual discourse is being concerned. Very often, this apparently generic designation (actually of Greek origin), mainly owed to the alleged conceptual strife for precision, notably in the analytic philosophy of Anglo-Saxon descent, is neither helpful nor even sufficiently redundant, if not superfluous altogether in the first place. In particular, if accompanied by another fashionable adjective. (Unfortunately, I have to admit that I myself have once introduced such a construction, when talking of “transcendental materialism” – but sometimes there is no other way available in order to achieve a minimal amount of clarification. This is probably the exception from the rule.) It turns out after all that most of the time, the meticulous differentiation of concepts is more appropriate to veil clarity and pretend an ostensive depth of reflexion rather than to access an actual gain in acquired knowledge.

This having said, we cannot deny however that the concept of “humanism” is indeed one of the oldest and most omnipresent concepts, but also one of the most iridescent and enigmatic concepts aiming at a designation of species while belonging to the afore-mentioned set of -isms. Nevertheless, as far as it goes, it is also a concept of considerable proper strength when pointing to fundamental components of what can be understood as a kind of basic ethics. In fact, humanism shares with ethics the disadvantage of being usually ill-defined and a source of misunderstandings. Hence, in order to avoid the re-invention of what is already known und sufficiently understood, it is always useful to ask for the conceptual origins of the concept in question. And this is what we will do in this present talk: We will look for the Greek and Roman origins, trace the development within the Renaissance framework, and turn then to more recent aspects. In the end, we will find that the origins of humanism provide a suitable entry into the epistemological foundations of living an adequately reflected life, despite the underlying suspicion of triviality that is always connected with the classificatory utilization of -isms. We also find that it is quite unnecessary to (re-)formulate new versions of humanism, because essentially, the mentioned origins stay structurally invariant through space and time. (The same is actually true for ethics.)