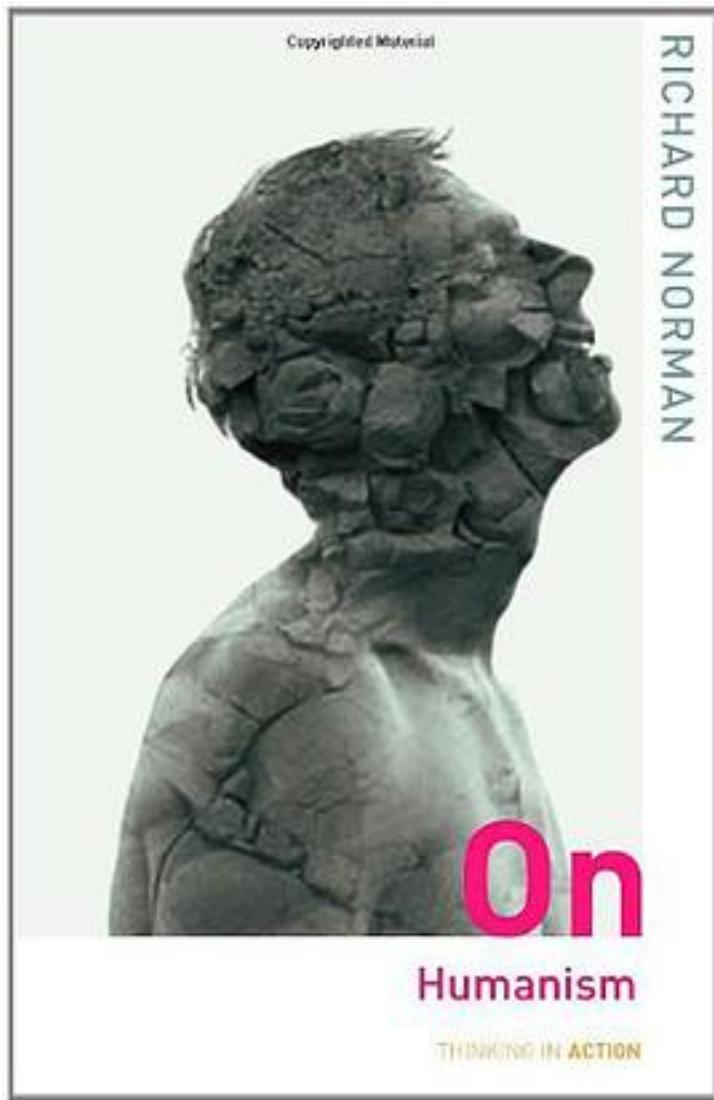


On Humanism



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humanism /'hju:meniz(e)m/ n. an outlook or system of thought concerned with human rather than divine or supernatural matters.

Albert Einstein, Isaac Asimov, E.M. Forster, Bertrand Russell, and Gloria Steinem all declared themselves humanists. What is humanism and why does it matter? Is there any doctrine every humanist must hold? If it rejects religion, what does it offer in its place? Have the twentieth century's crimes against humanity spelled the end for humanism?

On Humanism is a timely and powerfully argued philosophical defence of humanism. It is also an impassioned plea that we turn to ourselves, not religion, if we want to answer Socrates' age-old question: what is the best kind of life to lead? Although humanism has much in common with science, Richard Norman shows that it is far from a denial of the more mysterious, fragile side of being human. He deals with big questions such as the environment, Darwinism and 'creation science', euthanasia and abortion, and then argues that it is ultimately through the human capacity for art, literature and the imagination that humanism is a powerful alternative to religious belief.

Drawing on a varied range of examples from Aristotle to Primo Levi and the novels of Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift, On Humanism is a lucid and much needed reflection on this much talked about but little understood phenomenon.

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