Markku Peltonen examines humanist and republican themes in English political thinking between the mid sixteenth century and the Civil War. He challenges the dominant view that humanism fizzled out in the middle of the sixteenth century only to reemerge during the 1650s in the writings of such classical republicans as James Harrington and John Milton. The English never lost sight of humanism as a political discourse. They continued to use such deeply entrenched notions of the humanist tradition as the virtuous civic life and *vera nobilitas* throughout the period to portray themselves as citizens and to characterize their life as one of active participation rather than subjection.

In addition, early modern Englishmen resorted to more openly republican themes. They often argued that a republican form of government implemented in a highly successful manner the idea of meritocracy. The classical idea of a mixed constitution also exerted a profound influence on English political thought. Most importantly, some theorists felt no qualms about employing the central notion of republicanism – that governors should be elected rather than hereditary. As well as excavating humanist and republican themes, the study aims at locating their uses in their proper historical circumstances.

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