

# Introduction to Humanism:

## Types of Humanism; beliefs and practices; Humanist manifestos

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Humanism in a nutshell:

From an *Amazon.com* review of the book: "*Humanism, What's That?: A Book for Curious Kids*:"

"Humanists look at life as a natural process, so they don't believe in the supernatural. They rely on science to explain the meaning of life, not on religion, though they support each person's freedom to choose to believe or not to believe. Rather than speculating about what comes after death, humanists prefer to focus on life on earth. Humanists generally espouse the values of universal education, freedom of thought and free expression, open-minded pursuit of the truth, tolerance of others' differences, mutual respect, and preservation of the environment."

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They respect religious believer's right to freedom of thought, and care for humankind

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Types of Humanism:

In the religious arena, many words have a number of [different meanings](#). Some examples are: *Christian, cults, Humanist, pagan, Satanist, Witch and Witchcraft*. The terms *Humanism* and *Humanist* are essentially meaningless when used by themselves; their meaning only becomes clear when preceded by an adjective, as in:

- **Christian Humanism:** a philosophy based on Christian beliefs about the nature of God, and which advocate people's fulfillment by personal effort. Wikipedia defines it as:

"... the position that universal human dignity and individual freedom are essential and principal components of, or are at least compatible with, Christian doctrine and practice. It is a philosophical union of Christian and humanist principles."

- **Cultural Humanism:** A concept that knowledge can be obtained through rational thought and experimentation. It has its roots in ancient Greece and Rome. It developed into the scientific method and is the major underpinning of all sciences today.
- **Literary Humanism:** pursuit of the humanities (languages, literature, philosophy, history, etc.)
- **Modern Humanism:** a generic term encompassing both Religious and Secular Humanism.
- **Philosophical Humanism** is a philosophy centered upon the needs and interests of people.
- **Renaissance Humanism:** A movement starting at the end of the Middle Ages which renewed an interest in classical studies and promoted the concept that truth could be discovered by human effort.
- **Religious Humanism** is similar to secular humanism, except that it is practiced in a religious setting with fellowship and rituals, as in *Ethical Culture Societies*, congregations associated with the [Society for Humanistic Judaism](#), and some groups affiliated with the [Unitarian Universalist Association](#).
- **Secular Humanism** a non-religiously based philosophy promoting humanity as the measure of all things. It had its roots in the rationalism of the 18th Century and the free thought movement of the 19th Century.

This essay will deal primarily with Secular Humanism.

————— **No Scientific Humanism?**

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**Humanist beliefs and practices:**

***A Humanist Manifesto* was prepared in 1933, endorsed by 34 leading Humanists, and published in the 1933-MAY/JUN issue of *The New Humanist* (VI:3:1-5). <sup>1</sup>**

It was updated as the *Humanist Manifesto II* in 1973. <sup>2</sup> Some of the themes of the latter document are:

- They trace their roots to the rational philosophy first created in the West in ancient Greece. Many regard Socrates as the first and greatest of the Humanists.   
 | Interesting to note
- They value knowledge based on reason and hard evidence rather than on faith or revelation.
- Being secular Humanists, their belief system does not include the concept of a personal deity or deities. They regard humans as having greater ability than any other known species of intelligent life in the areas of conscious thought and awareness of the universe. From this belief naturally follows:
  - "the preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value."
  - a rejection of a created universe in favor of the theory of evolution and an uncreated universe without a designer and which obeys natural laws.
  - a rejection of divinely inspired ethical and moral codes in favor of codes derived by reason from the human condition.
  - the belief that full responsibility for the future of the world, its political systems, its ecology, etc. rests with humans. There is no God in Heaven to intervene and save us from a disaster.
- Many Humanists believe that much historical progress has arisen from the conflict between organized religion and secular society in which the former beliefs and practices have been gradually replaced with secular beliefs.   
 ————— Really great point
- They feel that religious groups' "promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful" to individuals
- They accept democracy and reject both theocracy and secular dictatorships as political systems that are dangerous to individual freedoms.

- They value freedom of inquiry, expression and action. They have a history of combating bigotry, hatred, discrimination, intolerance and censorship.
- They are energetic supporters of the principle of separation of church and state.
- They tend to have very liberal beliefs about controversial ethical topics, like abortion access, corporal punishment of children, death penalty, enforced prayer in schools, homosexuality, transgender individuals and transsexuals, same-sex marriage, physician assisted suicide, etc.
- They believe that "moral values derive their source from human experience." Since most believe that an afterlife is non-existent, they regard life here on earth to be particularly precious. They are highly motivated to alleviating pain and misery around the world. Many are active in refugee, human rights, anti-death penalty, environmental groups, etc.
- Generally speaking, they do not believe in
  - a personal God, a Goddess or a combination of Goddesses and Gods.
  - supernatural beings such as angels, demons, Satan, Holy Spirit, etc.
  - heaven or hell or life after death.
  - the division of a person into body, soul, and spirit.
  - survival of an individual's consciousness in any form after death.

**Humanist Manifesto III**, titled "Humanism and its aspirations" was written in 2003. It is not published as dogma that Humanists must believe; rather it represents a consensus of what all or almost all Humanists believe. Its basic points include:

- Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. ————— Scientific method
- Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.

- Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.
- Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.
- Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.
- Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. 3

The *American Humanist Association* encourages people who agree with the *Humanist Manifesto III* to become a signer. 5