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HUMANISM PHILOSOPHY

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KEYWORDS :

WHAT IS HUMANISM

"Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance that affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. Humanism stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. Humanism is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality." IHUE, let me summarize the different varieties of humanism in this way.

Literary Humanism is a devotion to the humanities or literary culture.

Renaissance Humanism is the spirit of learning that developed at the end of the Middle Ages with the revival of classical letters and a renewed confidence in the ability of human beings to determine for themselves truth and falsehood.

Cultural Humanism is the rational and empirical tradition that originated largely in ancient Greece and Rome, evolved throughout European history, and now constitutes a basic part of the Western approach to science, political theory, ethics, and law.

Philosophical Humanism is any outlook or way of life cantered on human need and interest. Sub-categories of this type include Christian Humanism and Modern Humanism.

Christian Humanism is defined by Webster's Third New International Dictionary as "a philosophy advocating the self-fulfilment of man within the framework of Christian principles." This more human-oriented faith is largely a product of the Renaissance and is a part of what made up Renaissance humanism.

Modern Humanism, also called Naturalistic Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Democratic Humanism is defined by one of its leading proponents, Corliss Lamont, as "a naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion." Modern Humanism has a dual origin, both secular and religious, and these constitute its sub-categories.

Secular Humanism is an outgrowth of 18th century enlightenment rationalism and 19th century free thought. Many secular groups, such as the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism and the American Rationalist Federation, and many otherwise unaffiliated academic philosophers and scientists, advocate this philosophy.

Religious Humanism emerged out of Ethical Culture, Unitarianism, and Universalism. Today, many Unitarian- Universalist congregations and all Ethical Culture societies describe themselves as humanist in the modern sense.

Secular and Religious Humanists both share the same worldview and the same basic principles. This is made evident by the fact that both Secular and Religious Humanists were among the signers of Humanist Manifesto I in 1933 and Humanist Manifesto II in 1973. From the standpoint of philosophy alone, there is no difference between the two. It is only in the definition of religion and in the practice of the philosophy that Religious and Secular Humanists effectively disagree.

Religious Humanists maintain that most human beings have personal and social needs that can only be met by religion (taken in the functional sense I just detailed). They do not feel that one should have to make a choice between meeting these needs in a traditional faith context versus not meeting them at all. Individuals who cannot feel at home in traditional religion should be able to find a home in non-traditional religion.

In the March 2, 1989, edition of the New York Review, he explained that, in The Satanic Verses he tried to give a secular, humanist vision of the birth of a great world religion. For this, apparently, I should be a tried. . . . "Battle lines are being drawn today," one of my characters remarks. "Secular versus religious, the light verses the dark. Better you choose which side you are on."

The Secular Humanist tradition is a tradition of defiance, a tradition that dates back to ancient Greece. One can see, even in Greek mythology, Humanist themes that are rarely, if ever, manifested in the mythologies of other cultures. And they certainly have not been repeated by modern religions. The best example here is the character Prometheus.

Prometheus stands out because he was idolized by ancient Greeks as the one who defied Zeus. He stole the fire of the gods and brought it down to earth. For this he was punished. And yet he continued his defiance amid his tortures. This is the root of the Humanist challenge to authority.

Civic Humanism

The term civic humanism has gained wide circulation and influence since its reception into English-language historical writing. Its diffusion is closely connected with the 'contextualist school' in the history of ideas. Its original, historically circumscribed meaning was extended to indicate a political language or discourse extending from classical origins to epochal manifestations — 'moments' — in the 'Atlantic republican tradition'. Reinterpretation of parts of the historical record of seventeenth century England and pre-revolutionary America as expressions of civic humanism provided a significant counterweight to the hitherto predominant Whig or Lockean-Liberal paradigm of constitutional development.In terms of sober historical scholarship the greatest value of the concept has been that of a heuristic device leading to important corrections of received ideas.

Baron studied the political culture of Renaissance Florence as an instance of a transhistorically exemplary mode of communal existence pertinent, not least, to his own times. Florentine civic humanism represented for him, furthermore, a decisive turning point in history. For Baron it was an epochal event that, by looking backward to antiquity pointed forward to modernity, a movement which he embraced wholeheartedly, without the misgivings of a Jacob Burckhardt or a Max Weber, as a liberating, civilizing, progressive process. The advent of civic humanism marked for Baron the victory of secular economic, social, and political ideals versus the asceticism, religious obscurantism, and hierarchy of the Middle Ages.

Knowledge, ethics, value and meaning

Knowledge

"A humanist is someone who recognises that we, human beings, are the most curious and capable curators of knowledge in the known universe. To gain knowledge, we must use our reason and experience to understand the world. And we may create or partake of the great artistic fruits of humankind to enhance our emotional palettes, deepen our empathy and enrich our understanding. But we reject any reliance on blindly received authority, or on dogma, or what others may claim is divine revelation (because we don't believe we get tip-offs about truth from a supreme being beyond time and space. That would be cheating!)"

Ethics

"A humanist is someone who recognises that we, human beings, are by far the most sophisticated moral actors on the Earth. We can grasp ethics. We are not being the only moral subjects (for example other animals deserve moral consideration, too!) But we have a unique capacity for moral choice: to act in the interests of welfare, advancement and fulfilment, or against it! To act well, we must take responsibility for ourselves and others, not for the sake of preferential treatment in any afterlife (even if we believed in it, that motivation wouldn't make our actions good!), but because the best we can do is to live this life as brilliantly as we can. That means helping others in community, advancing society, and flourishing at whatever we do best."

Value

"And a humanist is someone who finds value in themselves and each other, respecting the personhood and dignity of fellow human beings, not because we are made in the image of something else (we are a product of evolution, not the product of a divine plan), but because of what we are: a sentient, feeling species, with value and dignity inherent in each individual."

Meaning

"There is no reason to believe that "meaning" has to come from a supreme being. If you can write a sentence on paper which isn't nonsense, then you can create meaning! There is no divine plan or purpose, the humanist recognises, but we make our own purposes, tell our own stories, set our own goals. This gives life meaning." IHUE

Once we leave the areas of confusion, it is possible to explain, in straightforward terms, exactly what the modern Humanist philosophy is about. It is easy to summarize the basic ideas held in common by both Religious and Secular Humanists. These ideas are as follows:

Humanism is one of those philosophies for people who think for themselves. There is no area of thought that a Humanist is afraid to challenge and explore.

Humanism is a philosophy focused upon human means for comprehending reality. Humanists make no claims to possess or have access to supposed transcendent knowledge.

Humanism is a philosophy of reason and science in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, when it comes to the question of the most valid means for acquiring knowledge of the world, Humanists reject arbitrary faith, authority, revelation, and altered states of consciousness.

Humanism is a philosophy of imagination. Humanists recognize that intuitive feelings, hunches, speculation, flashes of inspiration, emotion, altered states of consciousness, and even religious experience, while not valid means to acquire knowledge, remain useful sources of ideas that can lead us to new ways of looking at the world. These ideas, after they have been assessed rationally for their usefulness, can then be put to work, often as alternate approaches for solving problems.

Humanism is a philosophy for the here and now. Humanists regard human values as making sense only in the context of human life rather than in the promise of a supposed life after death.

Humanism is a philosophy of compassion. Humanist ethics is solely concerned with meeting human needs and answering human problems--for both the individual and society--and devotes no attention to the satisfaction of the desires of supposed theological entities.

Humanism is a realistic philosophy. Humanists recognize the existence of moral dilemmas and the need for careful consideration of immediate and future consequences in moral decision making.

Humanism is, in sum, a philosophy for those in love with life. Humanists take responsibility for their own lives and relish the adventure of being part of new discoveries, seeking new knowledge, exploring new options. Instead of finding solace in prefabricated answers to the great questions of life, Humanists enjoy the open-endedness of a quest and the freedom of discovery that this entails.

1980 Humanist of the Year Andrei Sakharov, have stood up for human rights wherever such rights are suppressed. Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem fight for women's rights, Mathilde Krim battles the AIDS epidemic, and Margaret Atwood is one of the world's most outspoken advocates of literary freedom--Humanists all.

HUMANIST QUOTES

- "Nothing is accepted as valid, unless it springs from the roots of individuality."
- "We no longer believe that there is a norm of human life to which we must all strive to
- "Never have artists been less concerned about rules and norms in art than today. Each of them asserts their right to express, in the creations of their art, what is unique in them."
- "We do not want to be dependent in any respect, and where dependence must be, we
- Tolerate it only on condition that it coincides with a vital interest of our individuality."
- "The only knowing that satisfies us is the kind that submits to no external standard, but springs from a person's own inner life."
- "We strive for certainty in knowledge, but each in his or her own way."
- "We do not want to cram facts of knowledge into even an immature human being, a child. We try rather to develop the child's capacities in such a way that the child no longer needs to be compelled to understand, but wants to understand."
- "The true value of the sciences is seen only when we have shown the importance of their results for humanity."
- "Knowledge has value only in so far as it contributes to the all-around development of the whole of human nature."
- "One must be able to confront an idea as master; otherwise one will fall into its bondage."

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