

Servants' Meeting
1/17/2016

Humanism

Overview

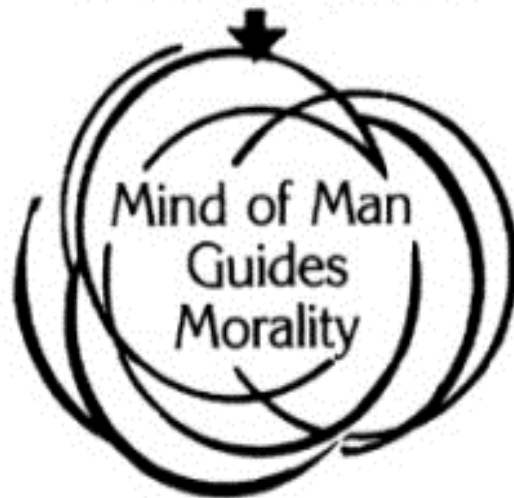
- What is It?
- Some Forms of Humanism
- How Did it Begin?
- Renaissance Humanism
- Unitarian Universalists
- Secular Humanism
- Examples of Humanism in our Culture
- Challenges to Christianity

What is It?

- an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings, emphasize common human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems
- It's meaning changes according to what group attaches themselves to it, but is generally attached to secular or atheistic doctrines

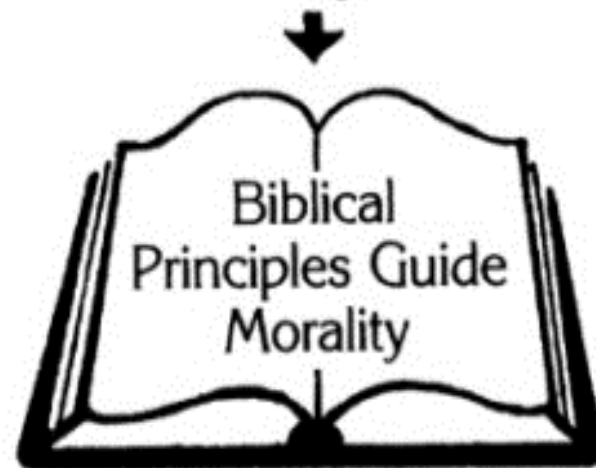
Secular Humanism

Man Created God
as a Projection
of His Own Mind



Christian World View

God Made Mankind
in His Own
Image



Some Forms of Humanism

- 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
- Christian Humanism is defined by Webster's Third New International Dictionary as "a philosophy advocating the self-fulfillment 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.

Some Forms of 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.”
- Religious Humanism largely 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.

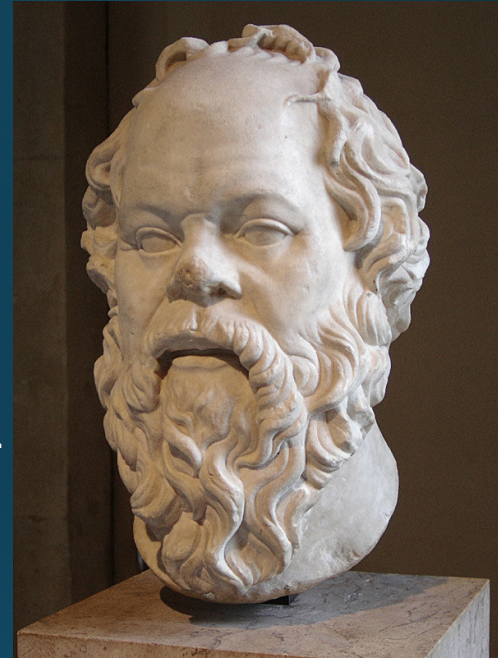
How Did it Begin?

- Ancient Greece:

- In Plato's *Euthyphro*, written around 400 B.C., Socrates shows that God is not necessarily the source of good, or even good himself. Socrates asks if something is good because God ordains it, or if God ordains it because it is already good. Yet, since the time of the ancient Greeks, no mainstream religion has permitted such questioning of God's will or made a hero out of a disobedient character. It is humanists who claim this tradition.

How Did it Begin?

- Socrates is considered the hero of Secular Humanism (skepticism):
 - Greek philosopher: “I know that I know nothing”
 - He challenged the popular thinking of Athenians and the wise → made enemies
 - During his trial, he was asked what his punishment should be: a salary paid by the government and free dinners for life
 - Was found guilty of both corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens and of impiety (“not believing in the gods of the state”)





How Did it Begin?

- Another hero from Ancient Greece was **Prometheus**
- Titan god who created mankind and was its greatest benefactor
- He defied Zeus, king of the gods, and stole fire from Mt. Olympus and gave it to mankind and showed them how to use it to develop metal work
- For this he was eternally punished by being helplessly chained to a rock and being visited daily by an eagle to eat his regenerated liver.





PROMETHEUS!

ZEUS, THE HAPPINESS
AND SUFFERING OF
EVERYONE ON EARTH
RESTS IN YOUR HANDS!

HOW CAN YOU HANDLE THE
AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY
OF DECIDING THE FATE
OF BILLIONS OF PEOPLE?

IT'S EASY—
I COULDN'T CARE LESS
ABOUT ANY OF THEM.

YES, I IMAGINE THAT
WOULD MAKE IT EASY!

Renaissance Humanism

- Humanists sought to create a citizenry able to speak and write with eloquence and clarity and thus capable of engaging in the civic life of their communities and persuading others to virtuous and prudent actions.
- Embraced by the Catholic Church:
 - Petrarch, papal secretary, was a hero
- Many humanists were ordained priests
- Efforts went into improving the understanding and translations of Biblical and early Christian texts

Unitarian Universalists

- They affirm and promote principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from **sources** as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.
 - Wisdom from the world’s religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
 - Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit
 - Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.



Unitarian Universalists

- Secular Humanists often refer to Unitarian Universalists as “humanists not yet out of the church habit.” But Unitarian Universalists sometimes counter that a Secular Humanist is simply an “unchurched Unitarian.”



**AMERICAN
HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION**



GOOD WITHOUT A GOD

Secular Humanism

- Secular Humanism and Religious Humanism:
- Now, while Secular Humanists may agree with much of what Religious Humanists do, they deny that this activity is properly called “religious.” This isn't a mere semantic debate. Secular Humanists maintain that there is so much in religion deserving of criticism that the good name of humanism should not be tainted by connection with it.

Secular Humanism

"[My book says] that there is an old, old conflict between the secular view of the world and the religious view of the world, and particularly between texts which claim to be divinely inspired and texts which are imaginatively inspired. . . I distrust people who claim to know the whole truth and who seek to orchestrate the world in line with that one true truth. I think that's a very dangerous position in the world. It needs to be challenged. It needs to be challenged constantly in all sorts of ways, and that's what I tried to do."

--Salman Rushdie on *The Satanic Verses*

Secular Humanism

Robert G. Ingersoll, American agnostic:

“When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world, not even in infinite space.

Secular Humanism

I was free-free to think, to express my thoughts-free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses, free to spread imagination's wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself... I was free!"

Examples of Humanism in Culture

- “Imagine” by John Lennon, 1971:

Imagine there's no heaven

It's easy if you try

No hell below us

Above us only sky

Imagine all the people

Living for today...



Photographer: Iain Macmillan / © Yoko Ono

Examples of Humanism in Culture

- “Imagine” by John Lennon, 1971:

Imagine there's no countries

It isn't hard to do

Nothing to kill or die for

And no religion too

Imagine all the people

Living life in peace...

Examples of Humanism in Culture

- “Imagine” by John Lennon, 1971:

Imagine no possessions

I wonder if you can

No need for greed or hunger

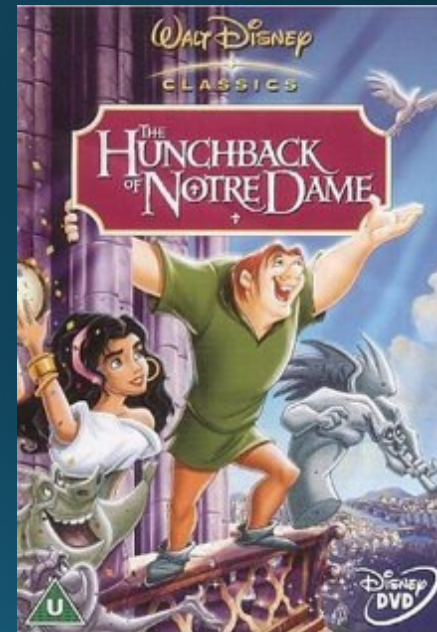
A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people

Sharing all the world...

Examples of Humanism in Culture

- Disney Movies
- Disney has long been criticized for being secular, humanist, anti-religion, and anti-Christian.
- There has been a long-standing ban against them by some conservative Christian, Jewish, and Muslim groups...
- There is an unwritten rule against the use of “God”
- “Hunchback of Notre Dame” in 1996 included the ballad “God Help the Outcasts”

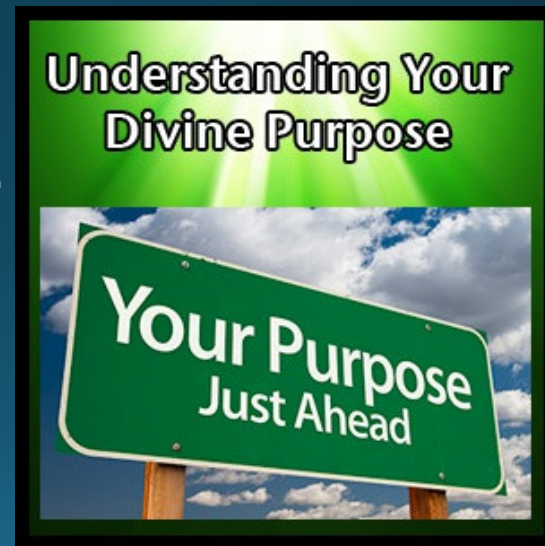


Examples of Humanism in Culture

- In an interview with Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez who wrote the songs for “Frozen”:
- Anderson-Lopez: It’s funny. One of the only places you have to draw the line at Disney is with religious things, the word God.
- Lopez: Yeah. You just can’t...
- Interviewer: You can’t say the word God?
- Lopez: There was even a – well, you can say it in Disney but you can’t put it in the movie.
- Anderson-Lopez: You can’t put it in the movies.

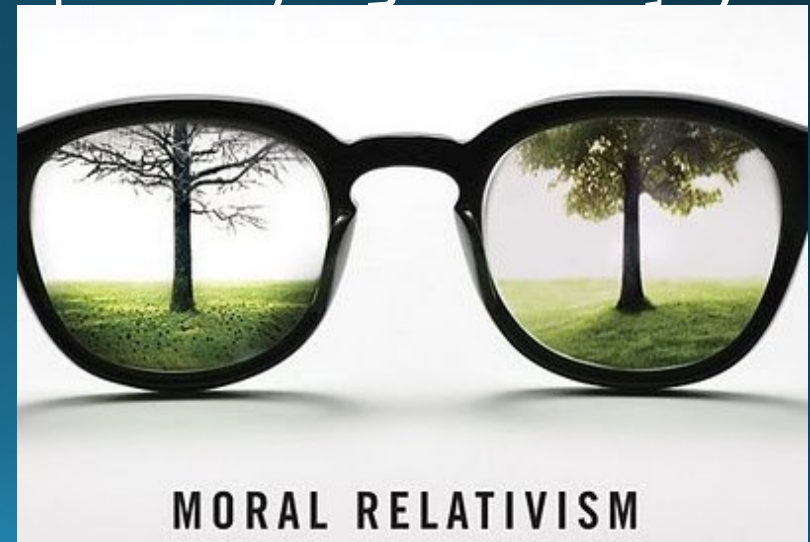
Challenges to Christianity 1

- In Humanism, there is no divine purpose for humanity.
- “We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us. We must save ourselves. We are all alone in this great big universe. No ultimate purpose whatsoever.”
–Humanist Manifesto II, 1973



Challenges to Christianity 2

- Humanists affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics are autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction.
- “There is probably no God, now stop worrying and enjoy your life.”
- No absolutes, but moral relativism



Challenges to Christianity 3

- Those who believe in God are “out of touch with reality,” “irrational,” and “unreasonable.”
- “In cultures such as ours, religion is very often an alien form of life to intellectuals. Living as we do in a post-enlightenment era, it is difficult for us to take religion seriously. The very concept seems fantastic to us...that people in our age can believe that they have had a personal encounter with God, that they could believe that they have experienced conversion through a “mystical experience of God,” so that they are born again in the Holy Spirit, is something that attests to human irrationality and a lack of sense of reality” –Kai Nielsen

Challenges to Christianity 4

- Desire for “sexual freedom”
- “In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered ‘evil.’” --Humanist Manifesto II

Challenges to Christianity 5

- Rejection of the need for virtues
- "I'm not in search of sanctity, sacredness, purity; these things are found after this life, not in this life; but in this life I search to be completely human: to feel, to give, to take, to laugh, to get lost, to be found, to dance, to love and to lust, to be so human." –C. Joybell C.

Challenge to Christianity 6

- Prayer is wishful thinking
- "I feel that we should stop wasting our time trying to please the supernatural and concentrate on improving the welfare of human beings. I think that we should use our energy and our initiative to solve our problems, and stop relying on prayer and wishful thinking. If we have faith in ourselves, we won't have to have faith in gods."
–Ruth Hurmence Green



Challenges to Christianity 7

- Suffering of any kind is to be rejected
- “Nor do we believe that any one church should impose its views of moral virtue and sin, sexual conduct, marriage, divorce, birth control, or abortion, or legislate them for the rest of society. As secular humanists we believe in the central importance of the value of human happiness here and now.” –Secular Humanist Declaration, 1980

Review

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