

HANDOUT: HUMANISM FACT SHEET

Origin: Dates from Greek and Roman antiquity; then, the European Renaissance; then as a philosophic and theological movement in the U.S. and Europe, mid-1800s and again in 1920s and 1930s, through today.

Adherents: Number unknown. Two national organizations are the American Humanist Association and the American Ethical Union. Humanist movements and individuals exist in Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and especially Unitarian Universalism. Humanism plays a role in many people's beliefs or spirituality without necessarily being acknowledged. Humanism also plays a role in most faiths without always being named.

Influential Figures/Prophets: Protagoras (Greek philosopher, 5th c. BCE, "Man is the measure of all things"), Jane Addams, Charles Darwin, John Dewey, Abraham Maslow, Isaac Asimov, R. Buckminster Fuller (also a Unitarian), Margaret Sanger, Carl Rogers, Bertrand Russell, Andrei Sakharov

Texts: No sacred text. Statements of humanist beliefs and intentions are found in three iterations of The Humanist Manifesto: 1933, 1973, and 2003; these are considered explanations of humanist philosophy, not statements of creed. The motto of the American Humanist Association is "Good without a God." To humanists, the broadest range of religious, scientific, moral, political, social texts and creative literature may be valued.

Clergy: None. Humanism is not a formally organized religion. Many Unitarian Universalist and other, especially liberal, clergy are Humanists or humanist-influenced. For congregations in the [Ethical Culture movement](http://www.eswow.org/what-is-ethical-culture) (at www.eswow.org/what-is-ethical-culture), professional Ethical Culture Leaders fill the roles of religious clergy, including meeting the pastoral needs of members, performing ceremonies, and serving as spokespeople for the congregation. The Humanist Society website offers directory of [Humanist Celebrants](http://humanist-society.org/celebrants/) (at humanist-society.org/celebrants/) who conduct memorials, baby namings, and other life-cycle ceremonies.

Symbol/s: Happy Human (unofficial); "Evolve" fish (unofficial)

Imagery: None

Terms and Fundamental Precepts

1. Humanists believe religion is a product of human history and culture. (God did not invent religion; people invented religion)

2. This is the only life we know of and understand. (Whatever we may think happens after we die, Humanists agree this life on earth is the only life we can be sure of—the one we experience, understand, and can take responsibility for.)

3. We—and no other, supernatural force—are each responsible for ourselves, for others, and for the Earth.

4. We have values, ethics, and a sense of right and wrong which we activate without threats of judgment, punishment, or reward from a supernatural force.

5. Reason, logic and our own observations and experiences are the natural and valid bases for human knowledge.

6. We should be agents of peace and justice. Religious Humanists believe meaning-making and ethical living are strengthened when sought in community.

Terms

Religious Humanism—a humanist philosophy within a religious tradition.

Secular Humanism—a humanist philosophy fully separate from religious tradition or beliefs.

Ethical Society/Ethical Culture Society—a humanistic religious and educational movement inspired by the ideal that the supreme aim of human life is working to create a more humane society. No centralized organization; all societies are independent.

Shared with Unitarian Universalism: Belief in...

- the inherent worth and dignity of all people
- value of science, scientific process, and rigorous intellectual processes
- individual responsibility for choices and behavior
- interdependence of living beings, an interconnected web of life
- humans as part of nature
- natural selection/evolution
- service to others and working for social justice
- maximizing personal fulfillment through living highest ideals

In the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993), Readings 466, 470, 521, 530, and 567 and Hymns 93, 115, 374, 378, and 380 are from the Humanist tradition.

HANDOUT: THE HUMANIST MANIFESTO III

From the [American Humanist Association](#); used with permission.

HUMANISM AND ITS ASPIRATIONS

Humanist Manifesto III, a successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifeway of Humanism - guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience - encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals. We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships. Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the wellbeing of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.

[Signers—Complete list of signers unavailable. Eighty-eight persons (including 22 Nobel laureates) are listed as "notable signers" on the American Humanist Association website.]

HANDOUT: ATHEISM/AGNOSTICISM FACT SHEET

Atheism/Agnosticism

Existence/Reemergence: Prehistory/mid 1600s

Adherents: 1.1 billion

Ranking: Third—behind Christianity (2.1B) and Islam (1.5B)

Influential Figures/Prophets: There are many famous people in many walks of life who identify as Atheists or Agnostics. Google "famous atheists" and "famous agnostics" for extensive lists of authors, scientists, entertainers, etc. with these identities.

Texts: None

Clergy: None

Symbol/s: Nothing official; Atomic Whirl, Darwin Fish for some

Terms and Fundamental Precepts:

Atheism—Non-belief in god or gods; belief that a supernatural deity does not exist

Strong or Positive Atheism—Positive belief that no god or gods exist

Weak or Negative Atheism—Simple lack of belief in god or gods

Positive Atheism (second meaning)—Atheist movement to live atheism in a positive way, esp. through consistency and truthfulness in personal ethics

Functional Atheism—Living without reference to religious teachings concerning god/s, but without self-identifying as an atheist, possibly attending church, etc.; a 'closeted' or unrealized atheist

Agnosticism—Lack of either belief or disbelief in God; a sense of "I do not know" if a god or gods exist; or a sense that "no one can know" whether a god or gods exist. One who believes there can be no proof of the existence of God, but does not deny the possibility that God exists.

Shared with Unitarian Universalism:

- value of science and the use of reason
- personal definition of truth
- insufficiency of unexamined beliefs
- value of living in consistency with one's beliefs
- concern for the protection of minorities, especially religious minorities

- imperative to oppose active or passive religious persecution
- dedication to separation of church and state, including raising public awareness of violations
- openness to learn from many sources of knowledge and wisdom
- UUs resist defining God or god in one way; do not share one understanding of "god" and may use the word to mean "love" or "spirit of life" and not a deity at all as commonly understood in other religions.