

HUMANISM AS RELIGION

Apologetics

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0. INTRODUCTION

0.1. WHAT IT IS ABOUT

- A critique of “our own times” (**Mt 16:3** interpret the signs of the times):
 - “a generation”; (**Pro 30:11-14** There is a generation that curses its father and does not bless its mother. ¹² There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filth. ¹³ There is a generation-- how haughty its eyes and pretentious its looks. ¹⁴ There is a generation whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, devouring the oppressed from the land and the needy from among mankind.)
 - **Luke 11:29** This generation is an evil generation.
 - **2Tim 3:1** ...in the last days there will come times of difficulty (καιροὶ χαλεποί)...
- What do I want to accomplish? Given that society is sick. (1) diagnosis → (2) prescription → (3) treatment. I shall try the first two in the process – to make a diagnosis and to suggest a biblical prescription to treat it (in the church, in society...)
- Two related lectures (“Humanism as Religion” & “Selfism”)
 - Humanist religion: originating from the political thought (ROUSSEAU *Le contrat sociale*)
 - Selfism: originating from the epistemological thought (DESCARTES *On Method*)

0.2. MODERN CONFLICT: SOCIETY ↔ THE INDIVIDUAL

Zwei Weltanschauungen, zwei Ansichten über die höchsten Zwecke unseres Seins stehen sich schroff gegenüber:

1. Der Sozialismus, d. h. der Glaube, daß die Gemeinschaft, sei es Stamm oder Volk, Stadt oder Staat, der oberste Zweck sei und daß der Einzel Mensch, das Individuum, nur als Glied und Organ des größeren Ganzen Wert habe.

2. Der Individualismus, die entgegengesetzte Überzeugung, daß das Individuum, das Ich, der oberste Zweck sei und daß Stadt, Staat, Volk und Gesellschaft nur in meinem Interesse da sind und da sein dürfen.

- In economics: (1) KEYNES ↔ (2) HAYEK
- In fiction: (1) ORWELL (1984) ↔ (2) HUXLEY (*Brave New World*)
- My two lectures: (1) humanism [society] ↔ (2) selfism [the individual]
 - “DURKHEIM’s central issue, before and after The division of labor in society, was based on the following question: “What explains the fact that, while becoming more autonomous, the individual becomes more closely dependent on society? How can he simultaneously be more personally developed and more seriously dependent?” (Durkheim 1902b, xliii-xliv)”²
 - [KIDD] “On the one side we have the self-assertive reason of the individual necessarily tending to be ever more and more developed by the evolutionary forces at work. On the other, we have the immensely wider interests of the social organism, and behind it those of the race in general, demanding, nevertheless, the most absolute subordination of this ever-increasing rational self-assertiveness in the individual.”³
 - [SNOW] “The title of SNOW’s lecture was ‘The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution’. The ‘two cultures’ he identified were those of ‘the literary intellectuals’ (as he called them) and of the natural scientists, between whom he claimed to find a profound mutual suspicion and incomprehension, which in turn had damaging consequences for the prospects of applying technology to the alleviation of the world’s problems.”⁴

0.3. VARIETIES OF HUMANISM

- There are “...**two forms** of humanism, the historical and the philosophical. (1) **Historical** humanism, unless otherwise guarded, is understood to cover the revival of interest in the Greek and Roman classics,... (2) **Philosophical** humanism is something different. It is the doctrine which finds, whether with or without clear intention, in human personality the key to the character of the universe. ... every positive view of the universe is attained on the humanistic principle; the special conclusion is that every form of theism is at the same time a form of humanism.”⁵
- SCHAEFFER: larger and narrower meaning of the word (The God Who Is There)
- Encyclopedia of Philosophy:



¹ WOLF, H. *Der antike Sozialismus und Individualismus*, Gütersloh : Bertelsmann, 1909, p. 11.

² ROSATI, M. *Ritual and the Sacred*, Farnham : Ashgate, 2009 p. 12

³ KIDD, B. *Social Evolution*, New York : Macmillan, 1907, p. 87-88

⁴ COLLINI, S. *Introduction*. In: SNOW, C.P. *The Two Cultures*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. vii-viii.

⁵ GORDON, G. A. *Humanism in New England Theology*, Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1920, p. 1,2, 4.

⁶ The word ‘Humanismus’ was created to differentiate the classical curriculum of secondary education with its

- “MACHIAVELLI (With him begins the critical philosophy of politics...); Fr.BACON (&&); HOBBS; SPINOZA; SHAFTESBURY; MANDEVILLE; GIBBON; MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT”⁷
- [NIETZSCHE] “All philosophers have the common failing that they start with present-day human beings and suppose that they will reach their goal by analyzing them. Involuntarily, they allow “man” to hover before their eyes as an *aeterna veritas*, something that remains the same through all turmoil, a secure measure for things.”⁸
- “Humanism always flourishes when peace and contentment are abroad, and humanism is the deadliest enemy that supernaturalism has to meet. ...Religion will mean the valuing of experiences and activities, the striving for their realization, the loyalty to their call.”⁹
- humanism as I use the word here, is a sort of *democratic socialism*, if such term can make sense...

0.4. WHY THE DESCRIPTION AS “RELIGION”?

- “...there is still a widespread suspicion, certainly at a popular level, that discourse involving religion has nothing constructive to offer in the twenty-first century. **Identifying an unbreachable dichotomy between ‘science’ and ‘religion’, the image of ‘warfare’ or ‘conflict’ is a common one**, in a manner which corresponds to the language adduced by two instrumental late-nineteenth century publications ...religion is perceived as belonging to the realm of the emotional, irrational and the subjective (see Barbour 1998: 77). ...‘When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called Religion’”¹⁰

- Insinuations:
 - (1) religion ⇒ something unprovable (unscientific; imagined...)¹¹
 - (2) religion ⇒ something private (personal preference;)
 - (3) religion ⇒ something unimportant (impractical; of no consequences)

0.5. THE MARKS OF A RELIGION

- (1) worldview based on *faith*, (2) ethics based on the idea of *the highest good*, (3) worship based on *emotional attachment* (rituals, traditions, admiration, trust etc.)
- “Tillich defines faith, and indirectly religion, as “ultimate concern.” Religion is direction or movement toward the ultimate or the unconditional And God rightly defined might be called the Unconditional. God, in the true sense, is indefinable.”¹²
- “ultimate” → the source of plausibility; beyond rational grasp...

[Humanist Manifesto I] Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture. (1933)

[Humanist Manifesto II] In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine “spiritual” experience and aspiration.

- “If religion is not about God, then what on earth is it about (for heaven’s sake)? It is about us. It is about manipulating our brains so that we might think, feel, and act in ways that are good for us, both individually and collectively. Religious traditions work like the bow of a violin, playing upon the strings of human nature to produce harmonious relations between individuals and their social

emphasis on Greek and Latin from the modern obsession with scientific, mathematical and practical education. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Version 1.0, London: Routledge)

⁷ ROBERTSON, J. M. *Pioneer Humanists*, London : Watts & Co., 1907, Contents.

⁸ NIETZSCHE, F. *Human, All Too Human*, Stanford : SUP, 1997,

⁹ SELLARS, R. W. *The Next Step in Religion*, New York : Macmillan, 1918, p. 192, 219.

¹⁰ www.ashgate.com/pdf/SamplePages/Exploring_Religion_and_the_Sacred_in_a_Media_Age_Intro.pdf

¹¹ “The Divine elements of Christian truth are such that, to my mind, they need no other evidence than their being clearly perceived.” (MORELL, J. D. *Philosophy of Religion*, New York : Appleton, 1849, p. 17.)

¹² TILLICH, P. *Ultimate Concern*, (<http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=538&C=597>) 29-Apr-2015.

and physical environments. Religions have always been about this business of adaptation, and they will always remain so.”¹³

1. THE MARKS OF THE HUMANISTIC RELIGION

- Can humanism really be a religion?

[HEIDEGGER] Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one. Every determination of the essence of the human being that already presupposes an interpretation of beings without asking about the truth of being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical. The result is that what is peculiar to all metaphysics, specifically with respect to the way the essence of the human being is determined, is that it is "humanistic." Accordingly, every humanism remains metaphysical.¹⁴

1.1. HUMANIST WORLDVIEW (FAITH → IDEAS)

- “To most people in this country, the term 'humanism' is more or less synonymous with 'atheism'. Even the philosophy student is likely to associate 'humanism' primarily with the secular ethics of the British Humanist Association rather than with any more distinctively philosophical tradition.”¹⁵
- “Grounded by enlightened optimism about progress, liberty, and human rights, modern Europeans reinvented their political, economic, and social institutions to reflect these new ideals.”¹⁶

1.1.1. [NATURAL] SCIENTIFIC METHOD

- discussion: humanitis ↔ natural sciences
- Science speculations → universes; *The Tao of Physics*...
- [SAGAN] “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”¹⁷
- [Humanist Manifesto I] “Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.”

1.1.2. EVOLUTION

- DAWKINS *The Selfish Gene*,

1.2. HUMANIST PRACTICE (FAITH → VALUES)

- Humans are born good. (ROUSSEAU)
- the highest good: the survival of human species; human society as a whole (one world...)
- ethics; politics;

[Humanist Manifesto II] We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so. (1973)

1.2.1. THE GUIDING IDEA

[SELLARS] But the humanist's religion is the religion of one who says yea to life here and now, of one who is self-reliant and fearless, intelligent and creative. It is the religion of the will to power, of one who is hard on himself and yet joyous in himself. It is the religion of courage and purpose and transforming energy. Its motto is, "What hath not man wrought?" Its goal is the mastery of things that they may become servants and instrumentalities to man's spiritual comradeship. Whatever mixture of magic, fear, ritual and adoration religion may have been in man's early days, it is now, and henceforth must be, that which concerns man's nobilities, his discovery of, and loyalty to, the pervasive values of life. The religious man will now be he who seeks out causes to be loyal to, social mistakes to correct, wounds to heal, achievements to further. He will be constructive, fearless, loyal, sensitive to the good wherever found, a believer in mankind, a fighter for things worth while.¹⁸

¹³ RUE, L. *Religion is not about God*, New Brunswick : Rutgers University Press, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁴ HEIDEGGER, M. *Pathmarks*, Cambridge : CUP, 1998, p. 245.

¹⁵ SOPER, K. *Humanism and Anti-humanism*, London : Hutchinson, 1986, p. 10.

¹⁶ CAMPBELL, H. M. *Advances in Democracy*, New York : Britannica, 2011, p. xi.

¹⁷ SAGAN, C. *Cosmos*, New York : Random House, chpt. 1.

¹⁸ SELLARS, R. W. *The Next Step in Religion*, p. 212.

[Humanist Manifesto III] 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 lifestance 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. (2003)

1.2.2. EGALITARIANISM/TOTALITARIANISM

- perfectionism in politics; therapeutic society; redistributionist state;

1.2.2.1. EGALITARIANISM IN IDEOLOGY

[CHESTERTON] The modern man says, "Let us leave all these arbitrary standards and embrace liberty." This is, logically rendered, "Let us not decide what is good, but let it be considered good not to decide it." He says, "Away with your old moral formulae; I am for progress." This, logically stated, means, "Let us not settle what is good; but let us settle whether we are getting more of it." He says, "Neither in religion nor morality, my friend, lie the hopes of the RACE, but in education." This, clearly expressed, means, „We cannot decide what is good, but let us give it to our children.“¹⁹

- ALTICK [reading habits 1800-1900]

“More people were reading than ever before, but in the opinion of most commentators, they were reading the wrong things, for the wrong reasons, and in the wrong way. What depressed these observers more than anything else was the apparent decline of serious purpose in reading. Sharing the familiar human bent for idealizing the past, they maintained that things were far different, and infinitely better, in the old days before reading had become democratized.”²⁰

1.2.2.1.1. SCIENTISM IN EDUCATION

- the goal of education – defined by the “good” society (→ Dewey, Hook) “A society of free individuals in which all, through their own work, contribute to the liberation and enrichment of the lives of others, is the only environment in which any individual can really grow normally to his full stature.” (www.minerva.mic.ul.ie/voll\)
- definition of science → no religion

1.2.2.1.2. “TOLERANCE” IN VALUES

- brainwashing → denying differences and the necessary psychological defence based on bad experiences

1.2.2.2. EGALITARIANISM IN ECONOMY

- equal results, not just equal conditions...

1.2.2.2.1. SOCIALISM

- Neomarxism (“western Marxism”);

Throughout the world, in the name of progress, men who call themselves communists, socialists, fascists, nationalists, progressives, and even liberals, are unanimous in holding that government with its instruments of coercion must, by commanding the people how they shall live, direct the course of civilization and fix the shape of things to come. They believe in what Mr. Stuart Chase accurately describes as "the overhead planning and control of economic activity." This is the dogma which all the prevailing dogmas presuppose. This is the mold in which are cast the thought and action of the epoch. No other approach to the regulation of human affairs is seriously considered, or is even conceived as possible. The recently enfranchised masses and the leaders of thought who supply their ideas are almost completely under the spell of this dogma. Only a handful here and there, groups without influence, isolated and disregarded thinkers, continue to challenge it. For the premises of authoritarian collectivism have become the working beliefs, the self-evident assumptions, the unquestioned axioms, not only of all the revolutionary regimes, but of nearly every effort which lays claim to being enlightened, humane, and progressive.²¹

¹⁹ CHESTERTON, G. K. *Heretics*, New York : John Lane, 1919, p. 33.

²⁰ ALTICK, R. *English Common Reader*, Columbus : Ohio State University Press, 1998, p. 368.

²¹ LIPPMANN, W. *The Good Society*, p. 3-4

1.3. HUMANIST WORSHIP (FAITH → ATTACHMENTS)

- [SAGAN] “No contemporary religion and no New Age belief seems to me to take sufficient account of the grandeur, magnificence, subtlety and intricacy of the Universe revealed by science. The fact that so little of the findings of modern science is prefigured in Scripture to my mind casts further doubt on its divine inspiration. But of course I might be wrong.”²²
- emptiness → the resurgence of spirituality at the end of the 20th ct.

2. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

- preach the primacy of the unseen world (against naturalism)
- preach individual responsibility (against egalitarianism)

2.1. PROTECT THE CHURCH

- Humanistic religion in the church → subservient Gospel
- anti-heretical motive – purity of the Gospel (teaching in the Church)
- “We are not sent to develop the races, we are sent to preach the gospel to every creature because Our Lord has commanded it, *and for no other reason.*”²³
- the primacy of God and the Gospel (before social, political, educational, environmental, survival problems) – humanity depends on the primacy of its relationship to God... (Make bread out of these stones...)

2.2. “UNDECEPTIONS” → APOLOGETICS

- apologetic motive → thinking Christianity
- God as more important than humanity
- eternity, more important than life...

2.2.1. “THE GOD WHO IS THERE”

- The problem of the “hypothetical God” (even *proven* hypothesis is only an *idea* – what we need is the *present* and *acting* God)
- Ex 3:14 אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה
- The “All Sustaining God” (יהוה)

2.2.2. THE ORIGINAL SIN

- Pro 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

[C.S. LEWIS] “**Humanitarian theory of punishment...** I believe that the “Humanity” which it claims is a dangerous illusion and disguises the possibility of cruelty and injustice without end. ...you start being “kind” to people before you have considered their rights, and then force upon them supposed kindnesses which they in fact had a right to refuse, and finally kindnesses which no one but you will recognize as kindnesses and which the recipient will feel as abominable cruelties.”²⁴

- against TOULMIN (used by SMART) – ethical norms are neither objective, nor subjective in the usual sense but they result from “the world of finite beings” when compared with “the world of the will of God”

2.2.3. THE UNSEEN WORLD VALUES

- **2Cor 4:17-18** For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

²² SAGAN, C. *The Demon-haunted World*, p. 118.

²³ CHAMBERS, O. *So send I you*.

²⁴ LEWIS, C. S. *God in the Dock*, Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1970, p. 287, 294.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- There is not more, but less, certainty in worldviews based on natural science.
- Humanism is very persuasive stressing human survival and care about the quality of human life, but always ends up in oppression. (Marxism, Nazism, eugenics...)
- Christian response must be bold focus on the unpopular truth about the God who is greater, humans who are sinful and the unseen world values that are eternal.