

What Is Humanism

Humanism

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Humanism is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the individual and social potential, and agency of human beings, whom it considers the starting point for serious moral and philosophical inquiry.

The meaning of the term "humanism" has changed according to successive intellectual movements that have identified with it. During the Italian Renaissance, Italian scholars inspired by Greek classical scholarship gave rise to the Renaissance humanism movement. During the Age of Enlightenment, humanistic values were reinforced by advances in science and technology, giving confidence to humans in their exploration of the world. By the early 20th century, organizations dedicated to humanism flourished in Europe and the United States, and have since expanded worldwide. In the early 21st century, the term generally denotes a focus on human well-being and advocates for human freedom, happiness, autonomy, and progress. It views humanity as responsible for the promotion and development of individuals, espouses the equal and inherent dignity of all human beings, and emphasizes a concern for humans in relation to the world. Humanists tend to advocate for human rights, free speech, progressive policies, and democracy.

Starting in the 20th century, organized humanist movements are almost exclusively non-religious and aligned with secularism. In contemporary usage, humanism as a philosophy refers to a non-theistic view centered on human agency, and a reliance only on science and reason rather than revelation from a divine source to understand the world. A humanist worldview by definition asserts that religion is not a precondition of morality, and as such humanists object to excessive religious entanglement with education and the state.

Many contemporary secular humanist organizations work under the umbrella of Humanists International. Well-known humanist associations include Humanists UK and the American Humanist Association.

Secular humanism

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Secular humanism is a philosophy, belief system, or life stance that embraces human reason, logic, secular ethics, and philosophical naturalism, while specifically rejecting religious dogma, supernaturalism, and superstition as the basis of morality and decision-making.

Secular humanism posits that human beings are capable of being ethical and moral without religion or belief in a deity. It does not, however, assume that humans are either inherently good or evil, nor does it present humans as being superior to nature. Rather, the humanist life stance emphasizes the unique responsibility facing humanity and the ethical consequences of human decisions. Fundamental to the concept of secular humanism is the strongly held viewpoint that ideology—be it religious or political—must be thoroughly examined by each individual and not simply accepted or rejected on faith. Along with this, an essential part of secular humanism is a continually adapting search for truth, primarily through science and philosophy. Many secular humanists derive their moral codes from a philosophy of utilitarianism, ethical naturalism, or evolutionary ethics, and some advocate a science of morality.

Humanists International, founded by Julian Huxley and Jaap van Praag, is the world union of more than one hundred humanist, rationalist, irreligious, atheist, Bright, secular, Ethical Culture, and freethought

organizations in more than 40 countries. The "Happy Human" is recognized as the official symbol of humanism internationally, used by secular humanist organizations in every part of the world.

The term itself is not uncontested. "Secular humanism" is not a universally used phrase, and is most prevalent in the United States. Most member organisations of Humanists International, for example, use simply the term "humanism" to refer to this concept, with some commentators remarking that "'hyphenated humanism' easily becomes more about the adjective than its referent".

Religious humanism

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Religious humanism or ethical humanism is an integration of humanist philosophy with congregational rites and community activity that center on human needs, interests, and abilities. Religious humanists set themselves apart from secular humanists by characterizing the nontheistic humanist life stance as a non-supernatural "religion" and structuring their organization around a congregational model.

Ethical Culture and religious humanist groups first formed in the United States from Unitarian ministers who, not believing in God, sought to build a secular religion influenced by the thinking of French philosopher Auguste Comte.

In the 21st century, religious humanists commonly unite under the umbrella of Ethical Culture or Ethical Humanism. This phenomenon is primarily centered in the United States. While a British Ethical movement was notably active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it had gradually distanced itself from its "religious" aspects by the 1960s. Instead, it emphasized humanism less as a religious identity and more as a practical label describing rational and non-religious perspectives on morality and ethics.

Christian humanism

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Christian humanism refers to two related concepts. In one usage, the term is applied retrospectively to sixteenth century Christian thinkers who were Renaissance humanists (medieval scholars involved in recovering the humanities traditions of Classical Antiquity). Another is "modern" Christian humanism, which is 20th century coinage emphasising the importance of humanitarian principles within a Christian moral framework, such as human dignity, individual freedom, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is not to be confused with modern humanism, which refers to philosophies that assert the primacy of human values and frame of reference over gods, theology, or religion in general. It should also not be conflated with religious humanism, which refers to a nontheistic movement that practices humanism in congregational structures.

Existentialism Is a Humanism

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Existentialism Is a Humanism (French: L'existentialisme est un humanisme) is a 1946 work by the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, based on a lecture by the same name he gave at Club Maintenant in Paris, on 29 October 1945. In early translations, Existentialism and Humanism was the title used in the United Kingdom; the work was originally published in the United States as Existentialism, and a later translation employs the original title.

Renaissance humanism

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Renaissance 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. Humanism, while set up by a small elite who had access to books and education, was intended as a cultural movement to influence all of society. It was a program to revive the cultural heritage, literary legacy, and moral philosophy of the Greco-Roman civilization.

It first began in Italy and then spread across Western Europe in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. During the period, the term humanist (Italian: umanista) referred to teachers and students of the humanities, known as the studia humanitatis, which included the study of Latin and Ancient Greek literatures, grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy. It was not until the 19th century that this began to be called humanism instead of the original humanities, and later by the retronym Renaissance humanism to distinguish it from later humanist developments.

During the Renaissance period most humanists were Christians, so their concern was to "purify and renew Christianity", not to do away with it. Their vision was to return ad fontes ("to the pure sources") to the Gospels, the New Testament and the Church Fathers, bypassing the complexities of medieval Christian theology.

Irving Babbitt

core doctrines that were to constitute what he called the "New Humanism". In 1895 he gave a lecture What is Humanism?, which announced his attack on Rousseau

Irving Babbitt (August 2, 1865 – July 15, 1933) was an American academic and literary critic, noted for his founding role in a movement that became known as the New Humanism, a significant influence on literary discussion and conservative thought in the period between 1910 and 1930. He was a cultural critic in the tradition of Matthew Arnold and a consistent opponent of romanticism, as represented by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Politically he can, without serious distortion, be called a follower of Aristotle and Edmund Burke. He was an advocate of classical humanism but also offered an ecumenical defense of religion. His humanism implied a broad knowledge of various moral and religious traditions. His book *Democracy and Leadership* (1924) is regarded as a classic text of political conservatism. Babbitt is regarded as a major influence over American cultural and political conservatism.

Individualism

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Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, and social outlook that emphasizes the intrinsic worth of the individual. Individualists promote realizing one's goals and desires, valuing independence and self-reliance, and advocating that the interests of the individual should gain precedence over the state or a social group, while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government. Individualism makes the individual its focus, and so starts "with the fundamental premise that the human individual is of primary importance in the struggle for liberation".

Individualism represents one kind of sociocultural perspective and is often defined in contrast to other perspectives, such as communitarianism, collectivism and corporatism.

Individualism is also associated with artistic and bohemian interests and lifestyles, where there is a tendency towards self-creation and experimentation as opposed to tradition or popular mass opinions and behaviors, and it is associated with humanist philosophical positions and ethics. "Individualism" has also been used as a term denoting "[t]he quality of being an individual; individuality", related to possessing "[a]n individual characteristic; a quirk".

Paul Kurtz

skeptic and secular humanist. He has been called "the father of secular humanism". He was Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the State University of New

Paul Kurtz (December 21, 1925 – October 20, 2012) was an American scientific skeptic and secular humanist. He has been called "the father of secular humanism". He was Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, having previously also taught at Vassar, Trinity, and Union colleges, and the New School for Social Research.

Kurtz founded the publishing house Prometheus Books in 1969. He was also the founder and past chairman of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI, formerly the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, CSICOP), the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Center for Inquiry. He was editor in chief of Free Inquiry magazine, a publication of the Council for Secular Humanism.

He was co-chair of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) from 1986 to 1994. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Humanist Laureate, president of the International Academy of Humanism and Honorary Associate of Rationalist International. As a member of the American Humanist Association, he contributed to the writing of Humanist Manifesto II. He was an editor of The Humanist, 1967–78.

Kurtz published over 800 articles or reviews and authored and edited over 50 books. Many of his books have been translated into over 60 languages.

What Is Enlightenment?

Question: What Is Enlightenment? (German: Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?), often referred to simply as "What Is Enlightenment?", is a 1784

"Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (German: Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?), often referred to simply as "What Is Enlightenment?", is a 1784 essay by the philosopher Immanuel Kant. In the December 1784 publication of the Berlinische Monatsschrift (Berlin Monthly), edited by Friedrich Gedike and Johann Erich Biester, Kant replied to the question posed a year earlier by the Reverend Johann Friedrich Zöllner, who was also an official in the Prussian government. Zöllner's question was addressed to a broad intellectual public community, in reply to Biester's essay titled "Proposal, not to engage the clergy any longer when marriages are conducted" (April 1783). A number of leading intellectuals replied with essays, of which Kant's is the most famous and has had the most impact. Kant's opening paragraph of the essay is a much-cited definition of a lack of enlightenment as people's inability to think for themselves due not to their lack of intellect, but lack of courage.

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