

**God in Our Culture:
Humanism, Secularism
and Smorgasbord
Religion**

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What is Humanism?

- Defined as a world-view or philosophy that derives values from the experience of human life in this world
- Worldview without reference to God, the supernatural, "gods" or higher beings or entities

Other terms used

- Naturalism
- Secularism
- "here and now" only thinking

Humanism relies on

- Science
- Empiricism
- Logic and logical thinking
- Reason
- “Feelings”**

Common themes of humanism

- Affirms human reason, compassion, responsibility, and trustworthiness of human experience
- Affirms human life in this world, as a part of nature
- Affirms worth, dignity and equality of all humans

Common themes ...

- Finding meaning is possible without recourse to the supernatural
- Ethical living is based on human experience, reason and valuing
- Supports democracy

Humanism and Religion

- Secular and sacred cannot and should not be separated
- Both believe in the basic (innate) goodness of human beings

- Context must be taken into account in making ethical decisions
- Wish to eliminate superstition and highlight significance of human needs, hopes and values

3 Humanist Statements

- Humanist Manifesto I
- Human Manifesto II
- Secular Humanist Manifesto

5 Humanist Organizations

- Ethical Culture Society
- American Humanist Association
- Friends of Religious Humanism
- Society for Humanistic Judaism
- Campus Freethought Alliance

Purpose of Humanist organizations

- Provide the same kind of emotional and intellectual support for members as religions do
- Represents one way people organize their lives in a meaningful fashion

Definitions

- Atheism
 - without belief in God
 - denial of the existence of God
 - Belief in God is a false belief
 - “God” is understood as the independent creator of the world, a being superlative powerful, wise and good.

Definitions

- Agnosticism
 - Do not know if God exists
 - It is impossible to know if God exists
 - Evidence for God’s existence is inconclusive

**Reasons for
atheism/agnosticism/humanism**

- Psychological
- Sociological
- Not consistent with scientific view of reality
- “God” is an ambiguous use of language
- Cannot reconcile a good, all-powerful God with so much suffering

More reasons ...

- Belief in God is incompatible with a belief in the autonomy and worth of people
- Not a factor in many people’s lives
- Belief in God takes away the proper focus of working to better this life; this life is devalued compared to the next

And more reasons ...

- Religious activists are responsible for much of the terror and violence in the world
- Traditional religious views are meaningless or are exploitive

Church of Scientology

- Founded by L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986)
- Original Thesis of 1948 and then ***Dianetics*** is the primary book of beliefs
- Thetans or human souls appear early in creation

Church of Scientology

- MEST (matter, energy, space and time) made the empirical universe.
- Unfortunately, Thetas fell into the MEST and came to earth

Church of Scientology

- Believes that Scientology finishes the work begun by Hinduism, Buddhism and some western religious ideologies
- Teaches there are two functions of the mind: analytical and reactive

Scientology teachings

“...individual consciousness, known as Thetan, has the capacity to separate mind from body and to create the phenomenal world of MEST – Matter, Energy, Space and Time. Thus, the origin of MEST lies in the Thetan. To be “clear” (i.e., totally free) is to fully understand how one is a Thetan and thereby to gain control over mind and body. In the words of Scientology, to be ‘clear’ is equivalent to being an *arhat*, a *bodhisattava*, and *avatar*.” (World Faiths, p 452).

Scientology ... more

- After becoming “clear”, the next step is to become an OT, an Operating Thetan – which is a higher state of consciousness.
- Beyond lie higher levels of OT, the highest identified by Hubbard as OT VII

Scientology ... more

- In all the church combines elements of past and present from Greco-Roman, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian beliefs and modern psychology and technological pragmatism.

**Church of
Scientology**

- To survive a Thetan must be assisted include family, groups and then all people
- Four other "dynamics" are life forms, physical universe, spirits and Infinity or God ("allness of all")
 - God is defined by the individual
- The goal of Scientology is to reach the state of "Clear" – the ability to remove obstacles and be what and where a person is
- www.scientology.org

Reprise: Why have we done this?

Basis for overview of religions:

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.
Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

And the point is?

- Christ-followers are called to be about the other person
- Caution: try not to do the work of the Spirit
- Instead: be an instrument of the Spirit
- It's not about being right; it's about presenting / representing / demonstrating Christ to others

How might you use all that you have learned about other viewpoints?
