

DEFINING HUMANISM

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Terminology:

- Fundamentalism
- Secular Humanism
- Theism vs. Non-theism – both are metaphysical interpretations of reality with many unanswerable questions
- - **Theism's problem** - it is difficult to construct a coherent concept that reconciles suffering and death with a beneficent deity, and impossible to describe this "totally other" non-human "force" or "being" in terms that are not mere projections of human experience, particularized and limited by human language
 - **Atheism's problem** - it is impossible to establish truth and other transcendental values without the use of metaphysics, which, by definition, are not real for people who assume that only the physical is real
 - Non-theism/atheism vs. anti-theism

The Humanist Character

Freud – the three hallmarks of maturity

The ability to work

The ability to love

The ability to tolerate ambiguity

Gregory of Nyssa:

"Concepts create idols; only wonder comprehends anything.

People kill one another over idols. Wonder makes us fall to our knees" (i.e., humble)

Lao Tzu:

Thought - not just for contemplation, but transformation as well

TAO TE CHING, Chapter 38 – spiritual hierarchy

“When the TAO is lost, there is virtue.

When virtue is lost, there is benevolence

When benevolence is lost, there is morality

When morality is lost, there are rituals

Rituals are due to lack of **confidence**,

And are the beginning of chaos.”

Confidence – a pervasive preference for “we all have equal value” to

“we are superior”

Religion

“that which binds,” i.e., a metaphor and idiom for power, knowledge and love, the most sublime of human “forces”

Power – requires cooperation

“The powerful do whatever they can, while the weak suffer what they must.” Thucydides circa 500 bce

Knowledge – different kinds of truth

How? For science

Why? For the humanities

Different rules of criticism and outcomes from controversy

PNAS Oct., 2007- study on influence of gossip

P.T. Barnum’s anthropology

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, Sept., 1999 – science and religion

Love - of what and whom?

Golden rule

Kant – use things, relate to people

“Nouvelle Theologie” and “ressourcement”

The Humanist Society

Two political paradigms –

Ideology/conformity/domination vs. Diversity/dignity/tolerance

The essential difference in these political paradigms is that the former accentuates economic freedom and personal security while the latter accentuates personal freedom

and economic security.

Evolution of freedom

Economic (initiative plus effort plus luck = success)
– antiquity (i.e., ancient Greece and Rome).

Personal – First articulated in the French revolution, but institutionalized only AFTER the American revolution in US Constitution, etc.
Critical difference – George Washington (cf. Cincinnatus)
plus many precursor elements of personal freedom were in British Common Law but were not incorporated into Napoleonic law.

Three personal paradigms

Power people

People people

Power/people people (i.e., reformers)

Based on two existential orientations (a.k.a. weltanschauung, gestalts, etc.)

our “identity” – how we differ from other humans

our “humanity” – how we are the same as other humans
(i.e., “us-them” vs. “us.”)

Humanism – pro-human or anti-human

If partially pro-human, which segment?

The intellectual elites?

Humble vs. arrogant

Curious vs. dogmatic

Respectful vs. judgmental

The economically resourceful?

Grateful vs. entitled

Respectful vs. judgmental

The Future of Capitalism by Lester C. Thurow

Will be determined by its (as yet undefined) competition

Capitalism—emphasizes economic freedom and personal security

- an “identity” based existential orientation
- a purely competitive economic process
- employs ideology/conformity/domination paradigm

Humanism—emphasizes personal freedom and economic security

- a “humanity” based existential orientation
- a cooperative economic process
- employs diversity/dignity/tolerance paradigm

Paradoxical nature of human beings.

What is/what might be/what ought to be