

~Humanism-A religious system of it's own!~

Humanist beliefs and practices:

A Humanist Manifesto was prepared in 1933, endorsed by 34 leading Humanists, and published in the 1933-MAY/JUN issue of The New Humanist (VI:3:1-5). 1 It was updated as the Humanist Manifesto II in 1973.

Some of the themes of the latter document are:

- They trace their roots to the rational philosophy first created in the West in ancient Greece. Many regard Socrates as the first and greatest of the Humanists.
 - They value knowledge based on reason and hard evidence rather than on faith.
- Being secular Humanists, they reject the concept of a personal God, and regard humans as supreme. From this belief naturally follows: "the preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value."
- A rejection of a created universe in favor of the theory of evolution and a universe that obeys natural laws
- A rejection of divinely inspired ethical and moral codes in favor of codes derived by reason from the human condition
- The belief that full responsibility for the future of the world, its political systems, its ecology, etc. rests with humans. There is no God in heaven to intervene and save us from a disaster
- Many Humanists believe that much historical progress has arisen from the conflict between organized religion and secular society in which the former beliefs and practices have been replaced with secular beliefs.
- They feel that religious groups' "promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful."
- They accept democracy and reject both theocracy and secular dictatorships as political systems that are dangerous to individual freedoms.
- They value freedom of inquiry, expression and action. They have a history of combating bigotry, hatred, discrimination, intolerance and censorship.
 - They are energetic supporters of the separation of church and state.
 - They tend to have very liberal beliefs about controversial ethical topics, like abortion, corporal punishment of children, death penalty, enforced prayer in schools, homosexuality, physician assisted suicide, etc.
- They believe that "moral values derive their source from human experience." Since most believe that an afterlife is non-existent, they regard life here on earth to be particularly precious. They are highly motivated to alleviating pain and misery around the world. Many are active in refugee, human rights, anti-death penalty, environmental groups, etc.

Generally speaking, they do not believe in:

- A personal God
- A Goddess or a combination of Goddesses and Gods
- Supernatural beings such as angels, demons, Satan, Holy Spirit, etc.
 - Heaven or hell or life after death
- The separation of a person into body, soul and spirit
 - Survival of an individual in any form after death

Is Humanism a religion?

The most widely used meaning of the word religion is probably the belief that a God or Gods exist who created the world, who is/are to be worshipped, and who is/are responsible for creating ethical and behavioral codes. In that context, Humanism is definitely not a religion, and would not be perceived as one by many of its followers. Humanists do not generally believe in a supreme deity or deities, demons, ghosts, angels, in a supernatural world, in heaven and hell, or in a divinely ordained ethical code for humans to follow. Most would regard God as a creation of mankind rather than the reverse.

Religious Humanism has been loosely defined as religion with matters of deity worship and traditional theological belief deleted. Replacing these factors is a belief in humanity as the highest known form of intelligent life, and a belief in the scientific method as the best way to determine truth. Many Secular Humanists feel that the role of religion throughout history has been so profoundly negative, that the word "religion" should not be connected to their philosophy.

During June 2000, a federal court of appeals ruled that Humanism is a religion.

Federal prisoner Ben Kalka attempted to form a humanism group as part of the Religious Services Department at a federal prison in Jesup, GA. He was refused when the Religious Issues Committee determined that Humanism was not a religion; it was "more philosophical and educational in nature." They decided that he could freely practice his humanism and could organize a group within the prison's Education Department.

In Sept. 1998, a federal district court ruled that Humanism is a religion.

But they decided that denying Kalka access to the prison chapel did not prevent him from practicing his humanist beliefs. *The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia agreed with the lower court.*

They agreed with the lower court that Humanism is a religion. However, they decided that "A reasonable official would not have believed that excluding Kalka's humanism from the prison's Religious Services Program was unlawful. There was neither precedent declaring humanism in general to be a religion nor any prior ruling on the religious nature of Kalka's beliefs." Thus, the prison officials were entitled to qualified immunity, and are not liable for civil rights violations.