

# Humanism and Christian Education

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by Carleton Toppe

Protagoras, the fifth century BC philosopher, tired of the standard explanation that the pagan gods were responsible for man's behavior, discarded theology as the authority in human affairs when he declared: "Man is the measure of all things." In that statement he gave the world the basic definition of humanism.

Perhaps this assertion should be qualified; it is the definition of secular humanism, atheistic humanism. Not all humanists were atheistic. The humanists of the Renaissance, who revived the study of the Greek and Latin classics, and fostered the conviction that these classics contain the highest expression of human values, were really Christian latinists – men like Petrarch, Erasmus, Sir Thomas More. These men could not be called atheists or agnostics. They had no desire to leave the church. They were opposing the humanities to medieval scholastic philosophy, not to essential Christianity. In Luther's day Humanist was a term synonymous with classicist or classical scholar. The word did not have the connotation then that it does now. But Erasmus, a committed humanist, feared for the future. He once said, "My chief fear is that with the revival of Greek literature there may be a revival of paganism. There are Christians who are Christian in name, and are Gentiles at heart."<sup>1</sup>

## Humanism Defined

The humanism of this century, however, is secular and atheistic, even if it calls itself religious humanism. It contains no more Christianity than did the humanism of the pagan Greek Protagoras. Consider some current definitions. "The attitude of mind which attaches primary importance to man and his faculties, affairs, temporal aspirations and well being" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).<sup>2</sup>

*Time* magazine: "Now Humanist means a believer in an ethical nonreligion, in which the Supreme Being is man, and prayer is 'a telephone conversation with no one at the other end.'"<sup>3</sup>

*The Struggle for Significance* defines it as follows: "Humanism is belief in the self-sufficiency of man to control his own destiny and to realize his inherent potentialities through rational thought processes. Man's final moral obligation is to strive continually to realize all the unique potentialities which are inherent in human nature, the ultimate value being man."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps one of the first thetic definitions was *A Humanist Manifesto*, issued in 1933.<sup>5</sup> In it we note such emphases as the following: The universe and man, with his culture, are products of evolution; man is the product of nature and history (culture); traditional religion, with its orientation to the supernatural, is passé; the concept of dualism must be abandoned (man has no immortal soul); self-realization, social well-being, and the enhancement of human life are man's purpose for being; rational attitudes, supported by education, will enable man to achieve his goals for the fulfillment of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950) vol. 5, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: William Benton, Publ., 1973) vol. 11, p. 825.

<sup>3</sup> *Time* magazine, Aug. 17, 1962, the article entitled "The Supreme Being: Man."

<sup>4</sup> W. D. Nunokawa, (Ed.) *Human Values and Abnormal Behavior*. (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1965) p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *Guidelines for Moral Instruction in California Schools*, a report accepted by the State Board of Education, May 9, 1969, pp. 37-40.

In 1973, forty years later, *Humanist Manifesto II* was issued.<sup>6</sup> Humanists realized that the 1933 statement was “far too optimistic.” Nazism; totalitarianism; the evil uses to which science has been put; the beginnings of police states, even in democratic societies; government espionage; racism, etc., compelled the restatement. Now faith and hope are more determinative than optimism. Excerpts from *Humanist Manifesto II* follow.

The next century can be and should be the humanistic century. Dramatic scientific, technological, and ever accelerating social and political changes crowd our awareness. We have virtually conquered the planet, explored the moon, overcome the natural limits of travel and communication; we stand at the dawn of a new age, ready to move farther into space and perhaps inhabit other planets. Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce diseases, extend our life-span, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life.

...views that merely reject theism are not equivalent to humanism. They lack commitment to the positive belief in the possibilities of human progress and to the values central to it. Humanism is an ethical process through which we all can move above the divisive particulars, heroic personalities, dogmatic creeds, and ritual customs of past religions or their mere negation.

## Religion

In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals.

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. We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.

Traditional religions often offer solace to humans, but, as so often, they inhibit humans from helping themselves or experiencing their full potentialities . . .we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species . . .humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.

Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices. The human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body.

## Ethics

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction.

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<sup>6</sup> See *The Humanist*, Sept./Oct. 1973 issue, pp. 5-9.

Ethics stems from human need and interest. We strive for the good life here and now.

*Reason and intelligence* are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses. The controlled use of scientific methods...must be extended further in the solution of human problems.

### **The Individual**

*The preciousness and dignity of the individual person* is a central humanist value. We believe in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility.

In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized...[we do not] wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered "evil." ...a civilized society should be a *tolerant* one...individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire. Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity."

### **Democratic Society**

To enhance freedom and dignity the individual must experience a full range of *civil liberties* in all societies. This includes freedom of speech and the press, political democracy...fair judicial process, religious liberty, freedom of association, and artistic, scientific, and cultural freedom. It also includes a recognition of an individual's right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide.

We are committed to an open and democratic society. We must extend *participatory democracy* in its true sense to the economy, the school, the family, the workplace, and voluntary associations. All persons should have a voice in developing the values and goals that determine their lives.

*The separation of church and state and the separation of ideology and state are imperative.* The state should encourage maximum freedom for different moral, political, religious, and social values in society.

*The principle of moral equality* must be furthered through elimination of all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin.

...we envision an *integrated* community where people have a maximum opportunity for free and voluntary association.

### **World Community**

We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to *transcend the limits of national sovereignty* and to move toward the building of a world community...

The world community must *renounce the resort to violence and force* as a method of solving international disputes. War is obsolete.

The world community must engage in *cooperative planning* concerning the use of rapidly depleting resources.

It is the moral obligation of the developed nations to provide...massive technical, agricultural, medical, and economic assistance, including birth control techniques, to the developing portions of the globe. World poverty must cease.

Technology is a vital key to human progress and development.

The world must be open to diverse political, ideological, and moral viewpoints...

### **Humanity as a Whole**

These are the times for men and women of good will to further the building of a peaceful and prosperous world. We urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcended...commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable; it transcends the narrow allegiances of church, state, party, class, or race in moving toward a wider vision of human potentiality. We believe that humankind has the potential intelligence, good will, and cooperative skill to implement this commitment in the decades ahead.

There were more than a hundred prominent signers. "The list includes congressmen, scientists, teachers in influential positions at colleges and universities in various parts of the world, newspaper editors and editorialists, financiers, industrialists, military leaders, clergymen, rabbis, foundation heads – in short, leaders who shape and mold opinion from their positions of authority and seats of influence."<sup>7</sup> Among the signers were Joseph Fletcher, author of *Situation Ethics*; B.F. Skinner, and Andrei Sakharov.

In his essay, entitled "Toward a New Humanism,"<sup>8</sup> Paul J. Braisted, former president of the Hazen Foundation, subscribes to the tenets of the *Humanist Manifesto*, even though he adds several accents. For him it is still "man who feels, perceives, thinks and wills, and reasons, who is the source of all the treasured values of each and every civilization." But there appears to be more awareness of the need for "values" ("the things that matter most"). "Systems of values," i.e., organized sets of doctrine, ideas or practice, are increasingly recognized as "crucial considerations for...social planners."

There is more respect for the religious experiences of communities and cultures. Religion is "a very creative, and perhaps the most creative, force in history." Its "still vital elements" must be incorporated in the "new humanism." But this "religion" is still viewed as born of man and fashioned by man in his endless quest for meaning.

To be both adequate and valid, an evaluation of humanism must be based on its own declarations. Therefore I have quoted from humanistic literature at some length in order to identify its characteristics and principles. Preferably all of you should have a copy of the full text of *Humanist Manifesto II* for reference and comparison. We are often unaware of the scope and

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<sup>7</sup> J. Gerlach, *The Tentacles of Humanism on the College Campus*, a paper delivered at the Campus Pastor's Workshop, Nov. 5, 1975, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Paul J. Braisted, *Toward a New Humanism* (New Haven: The Hazen Foundation, 1975).

strength of this movement and of its pervasive influence on the media, on education, and even on the churches. Our modern world is humanistic. It's all there in *Humanist Manifesto II*.

### **Humanism Versus Religion**

Carl R. Rogers, whom the American Humanist Association once named Humanist of the Year, bares his humanistic posture in his essay "The Person of Tomorrow."<sup>9</sup> Of the "New Man" he writes: "I believe the New Man has characteristics which run strongly counter to the orthodoxies, dogmas, forms, and creeds of the major western religions – Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism." He does not state bluntly: "The New Man has characteristics which run strongly counter to the Scriptures," but that is what his oblique statement means. Humanism opposes the Scriptures, both their God and Christ.

Humanism rejects both God and the Supernatural. Paul Kurtz, editor of *The Humanist*, writes: "We need to ask of the believer: What do you mean by 'God'? If it is still a transcendent divine being or reality who created man and influences and controls his destiny then [one cannot believe in God and still be a humanist]."<sup>10</sup> In his *Man and God at Yale* William Buckley, Jr., writes that the humanism of John Dewey "makes impossible any intelligible conception of an omnipotent, purposeful, and benign Supreme Being."<sup>11</sup> *Humanist Manifesto II*: "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural."<sup>12</sup> The secular humanist, like the fool in Psalm 14, says, "There is no God."

Consequently there is no divine revelation either. The humanist does not believe that the religion of Scripture is of divine origin and is divinely revealed. He holds that man's religious culture and civilization are "the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and his social heritage."<sup>13</sup> The humanist asserts that God did not inspire or write a word of the Bible.

If there is no God and no revelation, the Genesis account of man's origin is false. "The humanist believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process."<sup>14</sup> Sir Julian Huxley, the featured speaker at the centenary of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, is the complete evolutionist–humanist when he writes in his essay, "The Humanist Frame," "The earth was not created, it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion."<sup>15</sup> The humanist is nothing if he is not an evolutionist. The evolutionary process is the very foundation of his faith. Humanistic views, therefore, received their real impetus from the teachings of evolution that were published in the last half of the 19th century. For evolution applies not only to the genesis of life and matter; it also applies to the genesis and development of institutions (e.g., government, marriage, family), cultures, morality, religion, the concept of God. Julian Huxley consistently calls his humanistic idea-system Evolutionary Humanism.

Humanism denies the nature of man as Scripture depicts it. Man was not made in the image of a personal God; he is merely an organic part of nature. Man has no soul; dualism of

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<sup>9</sup> Carl R. Rogers, *The Person of Tomorrow* (LaJolla, CA: Center for Studies of the Person) p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *Christianity Today*, Feb. 15, 1974, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *Guidelines*, op. cit. p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> *The Humanist*, op. cit. p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *Guidelines*, op. cit. p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Humanist* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) p. 78.

mind and body must be rejected. *Humanist Manifesto II*: “As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context.”<sup>16</sup>

Man is autonomous; he is the master of his fate. His moral and spiritual potentialities are sufficient to reconstitute the human community and lead it to a full and meaningful life. “[Man] alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams.” He is at last becoming aware that “he has within himself the power for its achievement.”<sup>17</sup> The humanist can feel only contempt for the man who denigrates himself by saying, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Humanism leads man to glorify himself instead of God. Man is the only “god” this world has.

The word “ethics” is not absent from the vocabulary of the humanist, but it is not the ethics of the Ten Commandments, which God has chiseled in ageless granite. Carl Rogers is a spokesman for the pliant and flaccid humanist ethic when he states, “This person of tomorrow is deeply concerned with living in a moral and ethical way, but the morals are new and shifting, the ethics are relative to the situation...”<sup>18</sup> *Humanist Manifesto II*: “Ethics is autonomous and situational.”<sup>19</sup>

The humanist recognizes evil in society and is distressed by it. Man’s inhumanity to man, his ruthlessness, his folly are acknowledged to be formidable obstacles on the path to a more humane future. The concept of original sin is, however, anathema to him. Huxley calls the doctrines of original sin and damnation “cruel (and untrue).” The humanist cannot afford to grant the reality of original sin that damns. It would destroy him and all his philosophy.

The concept and reality of sin in general meets with the same repudiation. The word does not appear in either the 1933 or the 1973 manifestos. At most, *Humanist Manifesto II* acknowledges “social injustices”; “debasement forces of vulgarization, commercialization, bureaucratization, and dehumanization”; “totalitarian repression.” It prefers to speak of “problems.” It appears to view “evil” as an excrescence of an imperfect stage of man’s evolutionary development. Not all humanists are as realistic as Braisted, who at least recognizes man’s “inhumanity and folly,” though he will not call it sin.

Dr. Chisholm observes that the major obstacle to the achievement of humanism’s goals is mankind’s obsession with the concepts of sin and morality. He said, “We have been very slow to rediscover this truth and to recognize the unnecessary and artificially imposed inferiority, guilt and fear, commonly known as sin, under which we have almost all labored and which produces so much of the social maladjustment and unhappiness in the world. For many generations we have bowed our neck to the yoke of the conviction of sin.”<sup>20</sup> The humanist does not accept the revealed concept of accountability and transgression and guilt; he does not even accept the word.

Though he is conscious of the frustrations and tragedies that evil has begotten in man’s “sad and melancholy history,” he remains hopeful. Braisted writes: “Concentration upon evil distorts history, falsifies the inherent nature of man and often blocks the path to a more humane future.”<sup>21</sup> Then he adds, quoting Daniel Bell, that: “As a creature of nature, [man] is subject to its brutal contingencies; as a self-conscious spirit, he can stand outside both nature and history and strive to establish his own freedom, to control the direction of his fate.” The humanist is a believer still. He could not be if he acknowledged the reality of sin.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Humanist*, op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Guidelines*, op. cit. p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Rogers, op. cit. p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *The Humanist*, op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Gerlach, op. cit., from *Psychiatry*, Feb. issue, 1946.

<sup>21</sup> Braisted, op. cit. p. 46.

The inevitable corollary of not believing in the fall of man, original sin, and sin in general is rejecting a belief in the necessity of redemption through an incarnate divine Savior. The humanist may be civil and reserved in his rejection of the gospel of redemption from sin by Christ's atoning work – not even naming Jesus Christ in his repudiation of the supernatural – but when he is compelled to face up to Acts 4:12, his rejection – and even hatred – of Christ is Pavlovian in its inevitable response. He joins the worldling, the hedonist, and the atheist in their rejection of the Savior of mankind. *Humanist Manifesto II*: “No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”<sup>22</sup>

If humanism offers any salvation at all, it is salvation by works. Its supreme work is the quest for the good life for all men, and that good life is to be sought in the here and now. Its goal is that of the Principles of the Stockholm Conference on the Environment: “Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being.”<sup>23</sup> The humanist's religion is the promotion of social well-being, the enhancement of the value of human life. His gospel is a social gospel that seeks to banish hunger, poverty, ignorance, cruelty, and bloodshed from the earth.

The humanist speaks much of “fulfillment.” Man is to fulfill his potential – in labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation. He is to realize his goal of a meaningful, rewarding, and joyous life in concert and unity with all his fellow men. Babel is to be undone, and Eden to be restored.

But here and now; in this world, not in any world to come. The humanist's vision, lofty and dramatic as his utterances may be, is materialistic, earthbound, temporal, transient. His man is to live by bread alone. “Humanism seeks to make the prodigal comfortable, happy, and prosperous in the ‘far country’ and leave him there.”<sup>24</sup> But in that “far country” there is no Father's love, no Savior's grace, no Spirit's leading, no salvation.

At times the newer humanism may appear to speak appreciatively of religion. Braisted writes: “It is not possible in [a] broader context to overlook or casually dismiss man's religious experience.”<sup>25</sup> He grants that religion is “a very creative, and perhaps the most creative, force in history.” But he is including all religions. Christianity is not to be given preference over Mohammedanism, or Hinduism, or Buddhism, or Animism. The new humanism will take whatever elements are still vital in any or all religions and incorporate them in itself to establish “a new single religious system to replace the multiplicity of conflicting and incompatible religious systems that are now competing for the spirit of man.”<sup>26</sup> In its attitude toward the world's religions humanism is patronizing and egalitarian.

### **Education á la Humanism**

The humanist is relying on education to effect his world vision. The new age will not come into being without a program of education, primarily for the young. An integral part of this education is to impart a “world view.” In his essay, “An Education for Humanity,” H.L. Elvin defines this term: “By a world view I mean a view of man and his nature, of the earth and its history, and of the universe of which it is a minute part. I mean also a total response, at once

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<sup>22</sup> *The Humanist*, op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted by Braisted, op. cit. p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Christianity Today*, Aug. 10, 1973, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Braisted, op. cit. p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Huxley, op. cit. p. 106.

scientific and imaginative and in a sense also moral, to what we know and to what we are unlikely ever to know.”<sup>27</sup>

Corresponding to the concept of one world is humanism’s concept of unitary thought. Julian Huxley urges this strongly in his essay, “Education and Humanism”: “Education must be comprehensive, in dealing with every aspect of life; it must also have a unitary pattern, reflecting the unity of knowledge and the wholeness of experience. It must attempt to give growing minds a coherent picture of nature and man’s role in it, and to help immature personalities towards integration and self-realization.”<sup>28</sup>

A most important aspect of this unitary pattern of education is the inculcation of relative values (organized sets of doctrine, ideas, or practice). If humanists are united on anything, they are united on this. Humanism’s social values are “living and dynamic and thus capable of growth, of ever new expressions in response to changed or changing circumstances.”<sup>29</sup> Morality is not absolute. Morals are relative and are to be determined by their relation to human needs. It is the responsibility of scientists, not of philosophers and theologians, to investigate values and to control their determination in any given period of a human culture. The scientist is already accomplishing this, “partly through the evolutionary study of animal behavior, partly through the developmental study of human behavior, partly through a joint physiological and psychological attack on human mental activity.”<sup>30</sup>

Science is also to order man’s religious concepts. Unitary thought is also to be achieved here. “One of the main things needed by the world today is a new single religious system to replace the multiplicity of conflicting and incompatible religious systems that are now competing for the spirit of man.”<sup>31</sup> Religion, like morals, is to be adjusted to the changing needs of society. But humanism will never permit that change to include a return to a belief in “supernatural creators, rulers, or influencers of natural or human process,” least of all in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Humanism’s unitary religious thought is atheism for all.

Humanists also seem to be agreed upon the socio-emotional method for integrating personalities, well-adjusted to themselves and to society. One of humanism’s highest values is integration of personality. (This concept is an unspoken acknowledgment of the fact that man is out of tune with himself, out of harmony with his fellow man. Yet the humanist continues to reject God, and revealed law, and sin.) The learner’s personality must be adjusted, so that his conflicts will be resolved (for example, facing the problem of evil [original sin] and reconciling some violently opposed points of view), and some sort of wholeness will result.

The humanist’s educational method is focused on change. The behavior patterns of man must be adapted to “the ultimate existence of humanity.” His values must be changed, his religious concepts must be changed, his social ideology must be changed, his world view must be changed. This focus on change both assumes the evolutionary process and utilizes it. Faith in evolution gives the humanist his assurance and his hope, and his method. At the same time, as pointed out previously, the evolutionary outlook is scientific. Whether the education is to be technical, social, imaginative, moral, religious, it is the scientific method that is to be dominant. Scientific evolution will transform society.

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<sup>27</sup> Julian Huxley (Ed.), *The Humanist Frame* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961) p. 277.

<sup>28</sup> Huxley, *Essays*, op. cit. p. 129.

<sup>29</sup> Braisted, op. cit. p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Huxley, *Essays*, op. cit. p. 102.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.



Julian Huxley's statement on unitary thought concluded with the charge to education "to help immature personalities towards integration and self-realization."<sup>32</sup> This self-realization or self-actualization, as analyzed by Maslov,<sup>33</sup> has such characteristics as the following:

1. Self-actualized persons perceive reality more effectively than most people do and have more comfortable relations with it.
2. They can accept themselves and their various characteristics with little feeling of guilt or anxiety and, at the same time, can readily accept others.
3. They are problem-centered, not ego-centered, often devoting themselves to broad social problems as a mission in life.
4. They are relatively independent of their culture and environment but do not flaunt convention just for the sake of being different.
5. They have a deep social interest and identify in a sympathetic way with mankind as a whole.
6. They are democratic in their attitudes toward others, showing respect for all people, regardless of race, creed, income level, etc.
7. Their value system results automatically from acceptance of themselves and others. Most self-actualizers are not petty moralizers. What most people are offended by, what most people consider moral problems, are usually of no concern to self-actualizing people.

What can readily be distilled from these characteristics is the expression of an attitude of concern, on the one hand, and of tolerance on the other. Both are virtues. The Christian should also exhibit social concern as a citizen of a community and a member of the family of man. He also needs to practice tolerance of others whose ways are not his ways – socially, politically, even denominationally. After the Thirty Years War, for example, "Catholics and Protestants had to learn to coexist peacefully, tolerant of each other's convictions, without necessarily respecting them."<sup>34</sup> But he does not make social concern his salvation. In his tolerance he does not deny his faith or compromise God's standards of morality.

The humanist will not accept such limitations on tolerance. He will tolerate sin and guilt in himself and in others. "Most self-actualizers are not petty moralizers. What most people consider moral problems, are usually of no concern to self-actualizing people." His tolerance will not tolerate moral absolutes or the exclusive claims of Christianity. For him all religions are of equal validity. The "Judeo-Christian" ethic is not determinative for him. Tolerance is an important postulate of humanism.

How will humanistic education achieve this integration and self-actualization? What techniques will it use to accomplish its behavior modification? Basic to an understanding of its methodology is its concept of the child. The humanist views the child as "unique," a person with "worth and value" in its own right. (When he qualifies this characterization as the child's "creative inherent goodness," we recognize the vital difference between his concept of the "worth and value" of a child and the "worth and value" of a child God has created and redeemed.) This child has great potential to be developed. In this development the child is to be totally involved and to play an essential part, for included in its potential is its capability of

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<sup>32</sup> Huxley, *Essays*, op. cit. p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> F. L. Ruch & P.G. Zimbardo, *Psychology and Life* (8th ed.) (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1971) p. 432.

<sup>34</sup> Gerlach, op. cit. p. 6.

making intelligent choices in the learning process. It can decide what it needs to know; it can arrive at a valid definition of truth; it can elect appropriate behavior.

This child of “worth and value” has the potential of largely educating itself. (Incidentally, if this child of “worth and value” fails or goes wrong, it is the fault of unliberated parents and repressive society.) It does not need an authoritative instructor to tell it what it needs to know; it requires only a “facilitator” to assist it in its self-education. This “facilitator” helps it “discover” truth and knowledge. Through “inquiry” and “learning by doing” the child is to develop its potential and achieve an integrated personality and self-realization.

This “discovery” method dismisses the “facts and memory” type of education. The child is to learn by being given the necessary data for learning and therewith to arrive at its own conclusions. The child is to “discover” truth from the data it studies. This is the “conceptual inquiry” theory of learning. In an explanation of this method of teaching and learning through inquiry (often legitimate enough on the college level) Dr. Massialas, of the University of Michigan, writes:

Teaching through inquiry is the process of formulating and testing ideas and implies an open classroom climate that encourages a wide student participation and the expression of divergent points of view. For the students, the most important result of learning through inquiry is a change in attitudes toward knowledge. As they engage in the dialogue of inquiry, they begin to view knowledge as tentative rather than absolute, and they consider all knowledge claims as being subject to continuous revision and confirmation.<sup>35</sup>

This process gratifies the child’s ego. It “discovers” truth through its own efforts. With its own hands it is turning the key that unlocks the treasure chest of knowledge and insight. Proud of its reason and intelligence, it draws its own conclusions about the world in which it lives. But the child is only being manipulated into drawing “its” conclusions. It is supplied with only those data that its humanist educators have determined to provide. It is not better equipped to arrive at valid truth than was the *Hitlerjugend* of forty years ago or than are the readers of *Pravda* and *Izvestia* today. Its pathetic immaturity assures its conditioners of even more absolute thought control than the information bureaus of closed communist societies enjoy.

This nefarious business is conspicuous in MACOS (“Man: A Course of Study”), which represents “discovery” education at its most sophisticated level. The teacher simulates objectivity as he “facilitates” the children’s discussion of the animal life and the life of primitive Netsilik Eskimos, in his effort to teach the children adaptation to the world and to their animal forebears. When the children discuss the case of infanticide and of leaving a grandmother to die on the ice, the teacher plays a “neutral” role, making no pronouncements on moral absolutes. By not making final pronouncements on values, the teacher inculcates the idea that circumstances and environment determine ethical values. The “neutral” teacher, who is allowing the children to “discover” values, is inculcating relativism. The children learn that values are to be adapted to changing situations. They learn to question revealed law and even natural law. This conceptual inquiry and “discovery” method is “ideal for leaving the impression in the minds of impressionable children that truth is relative. And that idea is essential to the realization of humanistic goals.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Byron Massialas, *NEA Journal*, May 1969, quoted by Deloris Feak in “A Critique of ‘Organizing the Classroom for Learning.’”

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

It is true that Christian educators using the “discovery” method can be charged with channeling selected information to their students and with conditioning them to draw programmed conclusions. But the revealed knowledge and truth they are inculcating is the absolute antithesis of the secular “truth” humanistic education is imparting. Even on the human plane there is a vital difference between truth that is predicated upon acquired knowledge and experience, and the relativistic “truth” that humanists fashion from evolutionistic and utopian presuppositions. To program children into accepting incontrovertible truth is valid; to manipulate children into appropriating half truths and soul-destroying falsehoods is invalid and diabolical.

To return to the methodology of humanistic education – the humanist educator seeks to achieve the “discovery” of truths through “discussion” or dialogue with peers. In this “discussion,” or “process of dialogue,” facts and knowledge are not as important as self-expression. What the student thinks and feels must be regarded as true and genuine as far as he is concerned. His opinions must therefore be respected, for his “feelings” are valid because they are a part of himself.

In this “discussion” process the group must also respect the individual’s self-expression. Hence, any conclusion it arrives at must not be judgmental but represent only a kind of consensus as to what “truth” is, based on the data the teacher has provided. The “truth” it accepts is trebly relative: to the limited data supplied, to the opinions of the members of the peer group, and to the immaturity, inexperience, and naïveté of the members of the group. When we think of the child-victim of this education, the thought of the millstone forces itself upon us.

An extension and excrescence of this emphasis on the validity of “feelings” is the “sensitivity” training that some school systems have inaugurated. Instead of heightening the sense of individuality of the participants, however, such training orients them to the group and conditions them against acting for themselves, from inner conviction and strength. They “become slaves to their feelings, emotions, outside opinions as to their ‘worth’ as individuals, and to that sickening conformity of thought, meaningless expressions and aimless lack of conviction and morality that mark the sensitivity trainee.”<sup>37</sup>

In this humanist educational system several subjects lend themselves especially well to the implementation of its procedures and the achievement of its goals. As might be expected, evolutionary biology is a central or key subject in its curriculum. Material, social, and psychological ecology is useful in developing the desired environment of humanistic ideas, beliefs, and values. The study of world history is employed to effect the acceptance of the wider community of mankind. But humanist education knows how to draw a broad range of the curriculum into its service. Paul Braisted writes:

The social sciences, especially anthropology and sociology, can further nourish the acceptance of cultural pluralism as the way forward for contemporary men. Through a revival of intercultural studies, they can open avenues for learning from one another and resulting enrichment of life. The humanities can highlight the ideas, the values and the faiths of other times and peoples, and relate them to contemporary living, thus assisting the selective processes of the new humanism. The sciences as living processes can foster both the values of rational inquiry and imaginative outreach, gaining greater understanding of the world of nature and man, constantly widening the horizons and self-confidence of men. Technologies,

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<sup>37</sup> Feak, “Sensitivity Training – Good or Bad?” essay included in *Family Life Education*. Santa Clara County, privately circulated.

as instruments of and for mankind, can be developed and used for the primary purpose of human welfare, of improving health, education and leisure.<sup>38</sup>

Speaking of the humanistic philosophy of John Dewey, William Buckley, Jr., wrote in *Man and God at Yale*: “And there is surely not a department at Yale that is uncontaminated with the absolute that there are no absolutes, no intrinsic rights, no ultimate truths...these notions...emerge in courses in history and economics, in sociology and political science, in psychology and literature...”<sup>39</sup> The graduates of these institutions of higher learning are teaching our children in the public schools.

Where the ultimate objectives of this conceptual inquiry method are achieved, the child will be alienated from its parents, whose traditional concepts of right and wrong are tried before the juvenile jury of the classroom and are found wanting. The child is alienated from the church because it has been indoctrinated to subject all supernatural revelation and all moral pronouncements to the demands of scientific evidence. The child is alienated from the state because it has been conditioned to respect its own feelings more than outside authority. It is alienated from its national loyalties as it is cued into the world community which “transcends the limits of national sovereignty.” And, despite the goal of humanism to achieve the integration of the individual with society, it is actually alienating the child from other members of society by its exaltation of the supreme worth of the child, and of its autonomy. Christian parents will lose their child if humanistic education has its way.

### **Two Social Studies Texts**

The concluding portion of this paper will consist of some observations about two social studies texts that Mr. Plath asked me to examine to determine whether they have a humanistic bias. They are *Windows on Our World: The Way People Live* (Houghton Mifflin, 1976) and *The Social Sciences: Concepts and Values* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).

One readily observes that the conceptual inquiry method is full-blown in *The Social Sciences*. The sub-heading, *Concepts and Values*, already indicates as much. At the head of each unit’s teaching objectives is “concept-seeking.” After identifying a particular social science concept, the teacher and the class discuss it and evaluate it; this is followed by concept-forming, the appropriation or non-appropriation of the concept. The text is perfectly adapted to the conceptual inquiry method described by Massialas: “Teaching through inquiry is the process of formulating and testing ideas and implies an open classroom climate that encourages a wide student participation and the expression of divergent points of view.”<sup>40</sup> The “Focus” precludes to the units in *Windows on Our World* and the “Infer” performance objectives indicate that the conceptual inquiry method may well be employed with this text also.

Even a cursory reading of two social studies texts reveals a concern with values. “Concepts and values...are the substance of [this book’s] program” (*The Social Sciences*). Both texts are preoccupied with them. And it is on values that humanism focuses – establishing them, attaining them, changing them.

In *Windows on Our World* values are defined as “the ideas, qualities, or institutions we prize the most.” They are our deepest beliefs, such as truth, justice, freedom, love of family, loyalty, order, cleanliness, thrift, fame, power, reason, equality. Around these central beliefs, perhaps thousands of beliefs are clustered, both dependent on and supporting our central values.

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<sup>38</sup> Braisted, op. cit. p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Guidelines*, op. cit. p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Massialas, op. cit.

*Windows on Our World* identifies three kinds of beliefs: descriptive beliefs, beliefs about right and wrong, beliefs about what is beautiful.

It is obvious that the editors and publishers of these texts are intent upon influencing and changing the thinking and the behavior of children, even though *The Social Sciences* editors disclaim any overt efforts to do this. Edwin Fenton is quoted as urging teachers not to teach substantive values (he leaves it to the parents to tell children what to believe). But then he goes on to say that teachers should raise questions about values so that the child can “examine his feelings, his standards, and his attitudes.”<sup>41</sup> They should teach behavioral and procedural values, distinguishing these from substantive values. But a study of procedural values, for example, requires that a student “should defend his prejudices by submitting them to the tests of validation. Respect for evidence, reason, and judgment – rather than prejudice – is a procedural value.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, even if the parents impart substantive values to their children, the school will determine whether they are valid. They should – where appropriate – teach about them by raising the issues so that each child can examine them in terms of the canons of critical thinking.”<sup>43</sup> “If evidence from the testing of a value enables a student to discard a value he has held and adopt a sounder one, then has he not advanced?”<sup>44</sup>

Note such value-seeking and value-challenging questions as the following in *The Social Sciences*:

Do people think that some values are more important than others? (p. 146)

Which comes first – needs, values, or institutions? (p. 157)

If your needs and your values change, how can you get institutions to change to meet those needs and values? (p. 159)

How much freedom to do as he or she pleases can a son or daughter have without destroying the institution of the family? (p. 159)

Which is a more religious act, praying or eating properly? (p. 179)

Ask your parents why they might choose not to obey a law. (p. 180)

Do you have to agree with a law to obey it? (p. 183)

Is your behavior as a citizen in any way “traditional” behavior? (p. 303)

This preoccupation with values is so prominent that even a pupil’s construction-planning project is determined by it. In *Windows on Our World* the child is given the following directions: “Now it’s time for you to begin to turn your beliefs into a form that can be seen. Plan a neighborhood, park, farm, school, home, or even a town or city, that will reflect your values.”<sup>45</sup>

Both texts instruct the teacher to condition the children to change. “They examine how individual or group attitudes toward change bring about conflict. Eventually children study and analyze the behavior of different people in different societies when confronted with change,

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted by Principles and Practices in the Teaching of *The Social Sciences: Concepts and Values* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970) p. T-28.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. T-27.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> *Windows on Our World: The Way People Live*, Teacher’s Annotated Edition, Margaret Stimman Branson, author. Lee F. Anderson, general editor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976) p. T-480.

seeing how some people are resistant, clinging to traditional ways of life; how others yield slowly and reluctantly to change; while still others adjust to it readily” (*Windows on Our World*).<sup>46</sup> *The Social Sciences* directs the teacher, “Write on board: A person cannot change his inherited physical traits, but he can change his cultural traits.”<sup>47</sup>

These values are relative. “Environments shape human behavior.” Values are relative to a group. Social systems are shaped by the values of interacting groups. “(*The Social Sciences*)”<sup>48</sup> “Rightness or wrongness of specific actions, then, depends on the meaning which a given group attaches to the action” (*Windows on Our World*).<sup>49</sup> Cultural development, cultural changes are basic concerns in both texts. The unit on Social Behavior in *The Social Sciences*, for example, begins with primitive men, and moves through life in early Turkish and Mesopotamian villages, through Greek and Roman cultures, the empire of Ghana in 800 AD, the Middle Ages, the development of industrial cities, to modern America. As the children study the unit, they come to recognize that people create and change cultural forms. The children absorb the desired concept of socialization and the development of changed behavior patterns.

The peer group is to assist in making behavioral changes. “A supportive, frank, rational, and yet compassionate classroom is a good place to try out one’s values and build one’s own ever-growing values system” (*The Social Sciences*).<sup>50</sup>

Tolerance is an expressed goal of the editors of *Windows on Our World*. “Children who are able to accept the uncertainty inherent in the human condition can function more effectively. Lesson strategies are designed to develop children’s tolerance of diversity, change, ambiguity, and conflict, to present these elements of human existence as natural and unavoidable. Children are thereby encouraged to defend human differences...”<sup>51</sup> The child that has absorbed this attitude is more vulnerable to the teaching that there are no moral absolutes.

Humanistic education places an inflated value on the comprehension and judgment of children. *Windows on Our World* relies on them to make rational judgments “about the goodness and badness, the desirability or undesirability, the appropriateness or inappropriateness, of given phenomena.”<sup>52</sup> It expects them to make valid inferences on the basis of competent critical judgment.

The attack on Christianity is not as overt as in the official literature of humanism, but it is calculated and effective. *Windows on Our World* provides short descriptions of five major religions of the world: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism; they are placed on the same plane. The death of Jesus is not even mentioned; he is only the great teacher whom his followers placed on a divine pedestal. In the story of Red Jacket, a Seneca Indian chief, and the missionary, the superiority of the Christian religion is denied, and Red Jacket is depicted as the nobler of the two men. When the child is to learn about death, it is the Buddhist legend of Only One Poppy Seed that is used to show the child how to accept death. Christianity fares ill in this social studies text. It does not even make the index of *The Social Sciences*; Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Communism do. It does seem almost incredible that both books have been written around values, and they do not even acknowledge that it is the values of Christianity that

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. T-27.

<sup>47</sup> *The Social Sciences*, op. cit. p. 45

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>49</sup> *Windows on Our World*, op. cit. p. 196.

<sup>50</sup> *The Social Sciences*, op. cit. p. T-28.

<sup>51</sup> *Windows on Our World*, op. cit. p. T-20.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. T-17.

have permeated the Western culture that is producing those books. A humanist educator would feel comfortable with either book.

Other characteristics of humanism are recognizable in these social studies texts: the preoccupation with achieving and attaining the good life here and now; the commitment to participatory democracy, also in the class- room; the controlled use of scientific methods to solve human problems; the motivation to build a world community. Time does not permit us to underline all of them in this presentation. But those who choose and those who use these texts will need to identify such attributes of humanism also.

Both *Windows on Our World* and *The Social Sciences* are a scientific way of integrating and socializing our children. Their purpose is to make children adaptable to any kind of society, tolerant of all types of human behavior, willing to have their values shaped by the interacting groups to which they belong, ready to elevate world religion, world moral diversity, world values above their own, and thoroughly conditioned to accept all the goals and implications of the philosophy of evolution in the development of society and in the building of their own “ever-growing values system.” One is impressed by the attractiveness, the competence, the purposefulness, and the sophistication of these educational materials. But if they were not written by humanists, they were written for them. Whoever uses them must keep that in mind.

The public education system has embraced an anti-Christian humanism: its concepts, its methodology, its content. Many of our Christian people will recognize humanistic content in school curricula; they cannot as readily identify humanistic concepts and methodologies. Humanistic methods and systems are fraught with danger and can undo Christian purposes. Professionally trained Christian educators will need to identify these methods and protect our children and parents from their noxious effects. I hope that this paper has made some small contribution toward fulfilling that obligation.

**Humanism and Christian Education**  
Prof. Carleton Toppe

**Study Outline**

Introductory Remarks

1. Protagoras and secular humanism
2. The humanists of the Renaissance
3. The meaning of the term “humanism” in Luther’s day

I. Humanism Defined

- A. Characteristics of humanism of the present day
- B. Recent definitions of humanism
  1. Time Magazine (1962)
  2. The Struggle for Significance (1965)
  3. Encyclopedia Britannica (1973)
- C. Two modern-day statements of humanism’s creed

II. Humanism and Religion

Humanism’s anti-religion stance:

III. Humanism and Ethics

- A. Statement of principle
- B. Instruments for solution of ethical problems

IV. The Individual

- A. Basic principle
- B. Example of its harmful effect

VI. Humanism and Democratic Society

- A. Avenue to enhance freedom and dignity of the individual
- B. Role of participatory democracy
- C. Role of the state and values in society
- D. Furthering moral equality

VII. Humanism and the World Community

- A. Role of national sovereignty
- B. Activities in world community
- C. Moral obligation of developed nations

VIII. Humanity as a Whole

- A. Role of established institutions
- B. Extent of humanism’s influence
- C. Role of religion in humanism’s plans



## IX. Humanism Versus Religion

- A. Carl Roger's position
- B. John Dewey's viewpoint
- C. Secular humanists and Psalm 14
- D. Effect of denial of God and Scriptures
- E. Huxley's Evolutionary Humanism
- F. The nature of man
- G. Ethics to be practiced
- H. Humanism and its attitudes toward sin
- J. Humanist's religion
- K. Role of Christianity in humanistic system

## XI. Education à la Humanism

- A. Need for education
- B. Purpose of education
- C. Huxley and education
- D. Purpose of unitary pattern in education
- E. Science and man's religious concepts
- F. Education and the learner's personality
- G. Change as a goal in education
- H. The Christian and his social concern
- I. The Christian and tolerance
- J. Humanists and tolerance
- K. Techniques to achieve self-actualization
  - 1. Child's role
  - 2. Teacher's role
  - 3. The method
    - a. Discovery, or conceptual inquiry described
    - b. Requisites for conceptual inquiry technique
    - c. Role of knowledge
    - d. Macos ("Man: A Course of Study") as an example
    - e. Christian teachers and the method
    - f. Summary of methodology of humanistic education
    - d. Peer groups and their roles
  - 4. Sensitivity training as an extension of conceptual inquiry
  - 5. Subjects suitable for humanistic education
  - 6. Final effect of conceptual inquiry on the child

## XII. Two Social Studies Texts

- A. Titles
- B. Purpose of the texts
- C. Their attack on Christianity (p, 15)
- D. The responsibility of the Christian teacher