



The three frog spirits and humanism (2)

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THE EVIDENCE presented in the [previous article](#) clearly shows that the principles of the French Revolution, together with its institutional descendants, embody ideas that can readily be associated with humanist philosophy. Human rights and a democratic society are typical examples of this. However, it would be appropriate at this stage to define humanism more closely in order to be clear that modern humanism really is the outworking of the French Revolution.

Humanism defined

In 1995 a prominent American humanist scholar, Stephen D. Schafersman, delivered a paper which provides some excellent definitions of humanism.¹ It is worth reading in full. He began by observing that “humanism” has a number of distinct, but legitimate meanings:

“The study of the humanities—literature, history, philosophy . . .”;

“A second definition of humanism is the European Renaissance revival of interest and critical inquiry in Western classical literature, which . . . was pervasively secular and oriented to human, rather than theological, concerns, unlike that other great literary source of Western thought, the Bible. Individual scholars of such classical letters, such as Thomas More of England and Erasmus of Holland, were orthodox believers in an age of encompassing Christianity, but they are widely and correctly described as humanists, because they translated and commented upon the great literature of Aristotle, Plato, and other ancient classical, pagan writers”;

“A third definition of humanism is ‘humanitarianism . . . if such individuals are truly **humanitarian**, they can refer to themselves as humanists under this definition”.

Schafersman then goes on to argue that as a modern humanist he does not strictly fit any of these definitions. Instead he calls his philosophy “naturalistic humanism”, which he says is “the type of humanism in the news”; in other words, the humanism that underpins modern Western philosophy. He refines his definition as follows, stating that he stands for:

“. . . the type of humanism opposed to supernaturalism and theistic religion, the type of humanism that claims that humans are as much responsible for formulating their values, morals, and ideals as for following them.

“A good definition of Humanism is this:—humanism is the naturalistic philosophy or way of life centred on human concerns and values that asserts the **dignity and worth of humans** and their capacity for self-actualisation through the use of reason and scientific inquiry.

“Humanism serves, for many humanists, some of the psychological and social functions of a religion, but without belief in deities, transcendental entities, miracles, life after death, and the supernatural . . . Humanists affirm that humans have the **freedom** and obligation to give meaning, value, and purpose to their lives by their own **independent thought, free inquiry**, and responsible, creative activity. Humanists stand for the building of a more humane, just, compassionate, and **democratic society** using a realistic ethics based on **human reason**, experience, and reliable knowledge—an ethics that judges the consequences of human actions by the well-being of all life on Earth”.

1. Steven D. Schafersman, “The history and philosophy of humanism and its role in unitarian universalism”. An address to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Butler County, Oxford, Ohio, 24 September 1995, updated 1998. Now available on the Internet at <http://www.freeinquiry.com/humanism-uu.html>

Note firstly from this extract that in the emphasised words and phrases the Liberty, Equality and Fraternity cry of 1789 is repeated. Liberty equates to “freedom”. Equality is expressed in the notion of the “dignity and worth of humans”. Fraternity is implicit in the linking of humanism with a “democratic society”. Given that this link is therefore established, it is instructive to note other principles that are defined as part of humanism. *Humanism* is “centred on human concerns”, and on our “capacity for self-actualisation”. It is man-focused. By implication and extension, therefore, God is erased from the picture. Humanism is said to serve the “psychological and social functions of a religion”, as if that is all that religion is. So any God outside the human mind is dismissed as imaginary; there is no God, there is no afterlife.

Another inevitable extension of these principles is that man was the product of evolution, not creation. This is not expressed above, but we shall see that it is a fundamental humanist tenet. A tenet that is expressed above is that man sets his own morals and standards. The idea of an absolute righteous standard of Divine Law is inevitably ruled right out of court. It is easy to be taken in by the apparent humanitarianism of the humanist, and their claim that they seek to build a “compassionate” society. But when we begin to appreciate just how diametrically opposed the humanist philosophy is to Scripture we also begin to realise how accurate the Lord’s own description of the philosophy really is; it consists of “unclean spirits” or teachings, and should be avoided, shunned and opposed at all costs.

Schafersman’s views also articulate another vital humanist principle: that man is essentially master of his own destiny, the solver of all his own problems, the creator of his own utopia. Except, of course, there is implicit in his creed the inevitability of death, and that at best the utopia he creates can last no longer for the individual (the focus of all his concerns) than human life itself.

We have used this example because it succinctly expresses many humanist principles in one place. It may be thought that this is just a convenient selection of one person’s views to suit the argument being presented; that humanism traces its roots to the French Revolution. That this is not the case is readily demonstrated by going to the two humanist ‘Statements of Faith’, the Humanist Manifesto I (1933) and the Humanist Manifesto II (1973).² Given the foun-

ation we have so far built, these documents are extremely revealing, and readers are invited to consult them in full for themselves. Here we shall limit ourselves to illustrative clauses typical of the whole.

Humanist Manifesto I

- FIRST:** Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.
- SECOND:** Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.
- EIGHTH:** Religious Humanism considers the complete realisation of human personality to be the end of man’s life and seeks its development and fulfilment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist’s social passion.
- NINTH:** In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

This document was written in 1933 by a number of leading academics and philosophers of the day. It is the first formal humanist document. Given that we have already demonstrated the links between the French Revolution, derivative international documents, and humanism as a philosophy, it is interesting to see how this Manifesto builds on these themes. From just these four selected clauses, note the following points:

- God is disposed of, the universe is “self-existing”, thus man has total liberty of thought and freedom of action without external moral restraint
- Evolution is accepted, creation is rejected
- Humanism is man-centred and focused on this life, the here and now
- There is no concept of a future judgement to restrain man’s actions
- Religion is replaced by humanism; indeed, it is seen as religion in its own right in the sense that religion is reduced simply to human feelings and emotions
- Social wellbeing or fraternity is a key objective of life
- Implicitly, all are equal, in that the realisation of human personality is the fulfilment of life,

2. <http://www.jcn.com/manifestos.html>

and all are deemed to have a human personality of equal value. This contrasts with the Biblical view, which, whilst giving all men the opportunity of salvation on an equal basis, says they are not treated equally by God (though they are treated justly); they are treated by Him according to how they respond to His Word and commands

- Because there is no God in this philosophy, life ultimately is vanity; the best that is possible is the fulfilment of human personality within the span of a mortal life. At least the humanist is more honest than the orthodox apostate religious believer in admitting this, but nonetheless life is no less empty and purposeless in the final analysis.

Many of these points are taken even further by the Humanist Manifesto II of 1973. This was written by a larger group of 'wise' people (wise in the wisdom of this world), and it develops the themes set out forty years earlier.

Humanist Manifesto II

The preface to this document is astonishing in its arrogance. Despite admitting the horrors of Nazism, displaying base human potential, humanists still present a hopeful vision for a new century, even without God!

It is forty years since Humanist Manifesto I (1933) appeared. Events since then make that earlier statement seem far too optimistic. Nazism has shown the depths of brutality of which humanity is capable. Other totalitarian régimes have suppressed *human rights* without ending poverty. Science has sometimes brought evil as well as good. Recent decades have shown that inhuman wars can be made in the name of peace. The beginnings of police states, even in democratic societies, widespread government espionage, and other abuses of power by military, political, and industrial élites, and the continuance of unyielding racism, all present a different and difficult social outlook. In various societies, the demands of women and minority groups for *equal* rights effectively challenge our generation. As we approach the twenty-first century, however, an affirmative and hopeful vision is needed.

The document goes on to abandon religion and to argue that humankind is essentially capable of solving all the challenges and problems facing our world:

As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith. Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival.

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 disease, extend our life-span, significantly modify our behaviour, 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.

It is interesting to note with regard to the preceding paragraphs that so-called Christianity has contributed to this abandonment of religion and Biblical and Divine authority. Belief in the false doctrine of heaven-going has undermined the Christian religion. It is an unreasonable and unsupportable doctrine, which lays the so-called believer open to ridicule. Indeed, so emasculated has orthodox Christianity become, in terms of its lack of forthright clear beliefs and teachings, that the resulting insipid religion is little better than humanism. It is chiefly humanitarian in character, concentrating on alleviating human suffering, but has no clear, coherent set of beliefs, no clear vision to aim for, no clear set of standards to adhere to. Christians can do or think almost whatever they like, pastors and clergy included. The foundations of the churches have been destroyed from within by a philosophy to which it ought to be vehemently opposed—humanism.

Some further selective clauses are worth quoting to give the full flavour of this insidious and pervasive philosophy, which, as unclean spirits, is leading men to war and destruction:

Religion

FIRST: In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine 'spiritual' experience and aspiration.

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 . . . As nontheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.

SECOND: 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**.

Again, God is rejected and religion reduced to emotion. The focus is on self, on man, and on social issues.

Ethics

THIRD: We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now.

Any future hope beyond this life is rejected, and, because there is no God, moral values are set by man himself. Therefore as a result such values are reduced to matter of opinion. There is no absolute standard of right and wrong; every man does that which is "right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

The Individual

SIXTH: 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. While we do not approve of exploitative, denigrating forms of sexual expression, **neither do we wish to prohibit**, by law or social sanction, sexual behaviour between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered 'evil'. Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire. We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, in which humans are not exploited as sexual objects, and in which intimacy, sensitivity, respect, and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged. Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity.

The inevitable consequence of this philosophy is a degree of freedom in morals and behaviour that is at odds with the Bible. The paragraph above presents the dilemma in the humanists' mind. To be consistent with their own philosophy, they have to accept that humans have the liberty to act according to human desires. Yet it is evident that they are troubled by the extreme and harmful forms of behaviour that inevitably result, and that have become much more prevalent in Western society since these words were written in 1973. They are clearly struggling between human freedom and the harmful consequences that flow from such unfettered freedom. How much simpler to accept the unambiguous standards of the Creator; it removes all such difficulties.

Democratic Society

SEVENTH: 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, the legal right of opposition to governmental policies, 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 oppose the increasing invasion of privacy, by whatever means, in both totalitarian and democratic societies. **We would safeguard, extend, and implement the principles of human freedom evolved from the Magna Carta to the Bill of Rights, the Rights of Man, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

This final quotation is most interesting. Not only does it embody liberty and equality, it expounds fraternity as an obligation to democracy. Note also that it concludes by specifically tracing this Humanist Manifesto back, not merely to 1948 (UN Declaration) and the French Revolution, but also to the 1688 Bill of Rights and to the 1215 Magna Carta! This surely confirms the validity of our thesis, that the contemporary manifestation of the three frog spirits is humanism.

[\(To be concluded\)](#)



Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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The Sinai Peninsula

1. Roads and routes

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THE AIM OF this seven-part series of articles is to describe a range of features relating to the Sinai Peninsula, and to a lesser extent the adjacent wilderness areas of the Arabah and the Negev. Past and present aspects will be included, together with any Biblical connections, but there will be no detailed examination of the route taken by the Israelites in their wilderness journey. It is hoped that the subjects discussed will be of interest to Bible students, particularly those who may not be very familiar with the area under consideration.

The Sinai Peninsula extends over an area of 23,500 square miles. The Mediterranean bounds it on the north and the Red Sea on the south. The Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal lie on its west side and the Gulf of 'Aqaba and the Negev Desert on the east. In its greatest extent it is 130 miles from east to west and 240 miles north to south.

Travel and trade

On the whole, the lack of water, vegetation and shade make the Sinai Peninsula an inhospitable environment for travellers and their animals. Moses describes the area through which the Israelites travelled as "a desert land . . . a barren and howling waste" (Deut. 32:10, NIV). "They wan-

dered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in", says the psalmist (107:4), yet there was sufficient plant growth and water to support the flocks and herds, "large droves of livestock" (Ex. 12:38, NIV), that they brought out of Egypt.

Travel routes crossing Sinai were developed, particularly for the purpose of trade and commerce. Three main overland routes connected Egypt with countries to its north and east (see Map 1). The most southerly of these linked the area of Egypt just below the Nile Delta with Ezion-geber and Elath at the tip of the Gulf of 'Aqaba arm of the Red Sea (Deut. 2:8; 2 Chron. 20:36) and then continued on to Arabia. This route, running very nearly east-west, roughly divided Sinai into northern and southern halves.

There were two major routes passing through northern Sinai. The easiest of these was the coastal road that led from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, running roughly parallel to the Mediterranean Sea. This is described in Exodus 13:17 as "the way of the land of the Philistines". The children of Israel were prevented from leaving Egypt by this route to avoid the discouragement that would be occasioned by war with the Philis-