

# HUMANIST SPIRIT

Volume 1, Number 1

February 2003

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## WHAT IS HUMANISM?

**Humanism is a philosophy of life inspired by humanity and guided by reason.**

- Humanists think that science and reason provide the best basis for understanding the world around us.
- Humanists believe that moral values are properly founded on human empathy and scientific understanding.
- Humanists see no convincing evidence for gods, the supernatural, or life after death.
- Humanists believe we must live this life on the basis that it is the only life we'll have – that, therefore, we must make the most of it for ourselves, each other, and our world.

Humanist philosophies have arisen separately in many different cultures over many thousands of years. Today, this non-religious approach to life is shared by a significant portion of society. Whether or not they use the term **humanism**, tens of millions of Americans and hundreds of millions of people around the world agree with the humanist philosophy of living a happy and productive life based on reason and compassion.

There are different styles of doing Humanism or being Humanists, from Secular Humanists to Unitarian Universalists to Jewish Humanists to Ethical Culturists to unaffiliated. Humanists can be atheists or rationalists or skeptics. The important thing is to stress the positive aspects of Humanism and work with all well disposed people to make this a more human world.

## WHAT ISSUES CONCERN HUMANISTS?

Perhaps one issue that all Humanists can agree upon is the separation of church and state. While the principle of separation is explicit in the Bill of Rights and state constitutions, and has generally been upheld by the courts, we are now seeing that principle under increasing attack. Specific threats include

- School vouchers - tax support for denominational indoctrination
- “Faith-based” Initiatives - tax support for “faith based” charities
- Creationism - and now, “Intelligent Design”
- School Prayer
- Attacks on reproductive rights
- Turning churches into PACs

Humanists believe in freedom of religion and also, for those who choose, freedom FROM religion. They do not want to keep people from practicing their religion but they object to intrusion of dogma of any stripe into government and schools.

There are a number of organizations that approach these issues in slightly different ways. Check out the following websites:

American Humanist Association [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)

Americans for Religious Liberty [www.arlinc.org](http://www.arlinc.org)

Coalition for the Community of Reason [www.communityofreason.org](http://www.communityofreason.org)

Council for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP)

Council for Secular Humanism [www.secularhumanism.org](http://www.secularhumanism.org)

Freedom from Religion Foundation [www.ffrf.org](http://www.ffrf.org)

#### HOW MANY HUMANISTS ARE OUT THERE, ANYWAY?

According to the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey (made by an authoritative team at the City University of New York), there are nearly 160 million adult Christians in the United States, but the second largest group, numbering nearly thirty million adults, is the one described as *nonreligious or secular*. That group outnumbers Jews (2.8 million), Muslims (1.1 million), and Hindus, Buddhists and all other religions put together. The figure has nearly doubled since 1990.

#### THE HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF THE MONTEREY BAY AREA

This local chapter of the American Humanist Association has been in existence about three years. We meet monthly to hear interesting speakers, view videos on related issues, or have discussions. Everyone is welcome.

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#### **HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF THE MONTEREY BAY AREA (HAMBA)**

(Please see one of our current newsletters for our membership form)