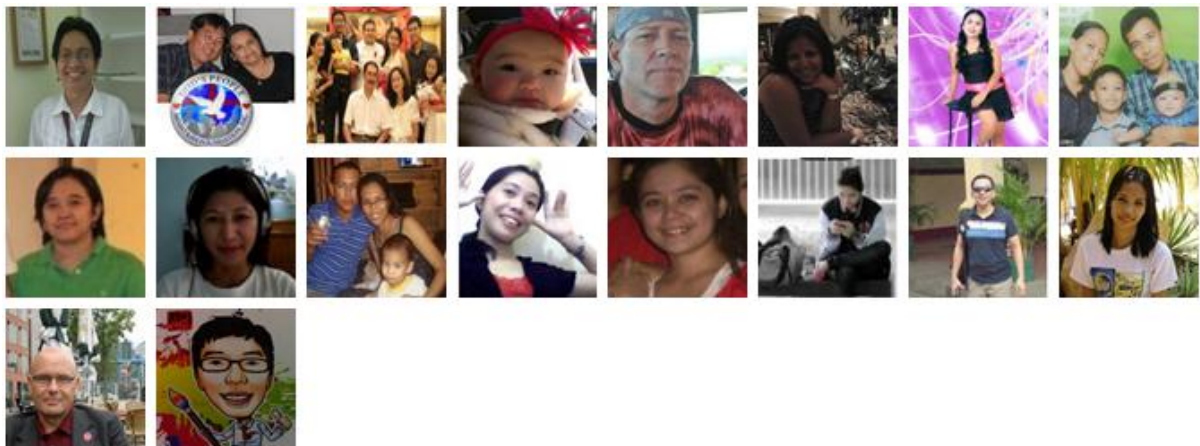


# IDEAS 64

**International Online Teachers Society  
Debate  
Educational Materials For  
Advance and Upper Intermediate  
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society  
Publishing Committee**



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## HUMANISM IN A WORLD WITH RELIGION

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The philosophy of humanism is rooted on the simple fact that reason transcends all other considerations about all things in this world. It does not dwell on the premise that something more profound exists, perhaps an idea, a supernatural concept or an unproven hypothesis for instance. Rather, the ideology rests on simple fact, common sense of something perceptible by the senses. It does not justify things with mere conjectures or guesses. It only sees things, I suppose, as being there or as being absent. It does not support imperceptible things. It finds strength in being able to prove something simply because it is something, not because it could be anything.

Religious humanism espouses the existence of God not as a transcendental being but as something that concretely moves within man himself. We might say that humanism doesn't support religion of any sort, believing as it does in the ability of man to govern himself independent of any Omnipotent "other" force. It espouses that man's goodness emanates from himself, and not from a Higher Being that animates his life or the things around and in his life. It's a kind of political independence that man believes he possesses inherently, quite far from having an "inner" higher being to help him be moved this way or that in the nature of making decisions.

Humanism doesn't find support in the belief of the unknown. It does not thrive in the often less-than-concrete elaboration—or attempt at explanation—through less conceivable means. For the humanist, if no explanation exists for something being there, then that something simply doesn't exist. Imagination begins and ends when no other more perceptible explanation or information truly exists. For humanists, it's either common sense and actual perception, and anything left to the imagination simply doesn't merit consideration. Man is an entity upon himself, and no other justification needs to be there anymore.

If shared experiences of something exist, then that thing surely exists. Humanism thrives in a provable, repeated experience of something, but the experience that is scattered, isolated or still has reasonable doubt doesn't merit holding attention to. For humanists, the essence of everything on this earth is a matter of existence. If that existence merely exists at some borders but fails to show up in some other aspects, then it simply does not exist.

Based on these philosophical rationalizations of the ideology of humanism, we can conclude that the entire ideology concentrates on either what is black or what is white, with no grey area in between. It's a very constricting notion, I believe, in that it doesn't open itself to the premise that something could be true based on an unexpanded—and not thoroughly knowable-- explanation.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define humanism in your own terms.
2. What makes humanism stand apart from religion? Be as specific as necessary.
3. Are you a religious person? Why or why not?
4. Do you agree with the concepts of humanism? Why or why not?
5. Why is humanism a practical way of seeing things in this world?



## TRACES OF HUMANISM IN MYSELF

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Humanism is a philosophy that has long espoused that humans are self-sufficient within and of themselves, and no further justification, concept or transcendental factor needs to be brought into the entire equation of human existence. It thrives on individualism as it does on skepticism and liberalism. Man exists simply because he was meant to be, not by the grace of perhaps a Higher Being Who made all things possible.

I have long heard the long and short of this argument from people I know and don't personally know who derive no satisfactory explanation for staying true to one particular religion. For them, there will always be more worthwhile pursuits out there that can ultimately replace going to a church service, a fellowship meeting, a Sunday Mass. For them, no Supernatural, Transcendental being can ever replace their ability to be themselves. They simply came upon the Earth without Divine Intervention or Great Intercession. In other words, they were put on this planet not by a Powerful Being, but they have a right to exist much like other people do.

If you ask them about anything having to do with religion, they'd simply shrug their shoulders and say, "What has that got to do with me or with anything, for that matter?" They do not wish to dwell on what they perceive as mere inanities of existence. They live their lives simply because they have been meant to do so, and not only because they can pursue something else that's more profound than this empty existence. The question, "What is your purpose in life?" is simply answered with "Because I am me, and nothing else plays a more significant role in my life than that."

For humanism, supernatural or unexplained phenomenon is not meant to be understood. Neither does it merit practical attention or devotion or senseless delving into. Whatever has no existing explanation was not meant to be explained, much less understood.

I confess to being both half-in and half-out on this thinking. I don't believe in ghosts, but fear being cast into experiencing them by sheer stroke of (bad) luck. I am not superstitious, but I do the sign of the cross when I hear about a really terrible event or misfortune. I hate seeing black cats, never mind if they're just walking by me or giving me the curious eye. I believe in sharing whatever blessings I get, but frown upon giving alms on the street to kids who could potentially use the money for gambling or worse, surrender it to their beer-guzzling or gambling-addicted parents.

I am not overly cautious about many things in life, preferring to explore whatever lies before me. But I so desperately beg my kids to study their options carefully all the time before taking any leap.  
Would you consider me a humanist?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What makes humanism different from other ideologies such as institutionalized religion?
2. Would you call the writer a humanist? Why or why not?
3. Would you classify yourself as a humanist? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe that you were put on this earth by a Powerful Being that can control you and all other aspects of your life? Why or why not?
5. Is it easy to be a humanist? Why or why not?



## OF CONTEMPORARY HUMANISM AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

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The old school of thought of humanism had always focused on the ability of people to be perfect upon themselves, regardless of others. Contemporary humanism, however, supports the idea that man doesn't carry the all-perfect ability to do good upon himself alone but with the help of others around him. This is a much more agreeable concept than its ancient counterpart simply because well, no man is an island. More hands and feet can do greater good for all humanity.

We interact with each other. This makes our experiences shared. The interwoven lattices within which our lives revolve make us complete human beings. Remember Jerry Maguire? How he declared "You complete me." to his paramour? Well, we complete the lives of one another on the planet, no matter how far apart or how distant we may all be from each other. There will come a time when we will have interacted with millions on the globe without knowing it. There's Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites. We might not know each other personally, but there will always be someone somewhere we may mutually be acquainted with.

I like inspirational quotes, and although Paulo Coelho may not personally know me or that I even exist, I have joined the countless people that have expressed their likes on his numerous motivational quotes posted on Facebook. The whole thing could just be the work of his publicist, but heck, I still get to express my appreciation for his talent with words, one way or another.

I may not personally be on a first name basis with the cast of characters on The Big Bang Theory, but I enjoy the fact that I can share quotes from the show or share videos and pictures of the cast members on my social networking site wall any time. I love that remote people from many parts of the globe can be humanistic and share their humanism with so many others on my side of the planet, all with the click of the mouse or the stroke of a key.

Humanism has indeed, reached a more shared global scale that it has lost most of its individualistic, selfish aspects. We can now be humanistic together. The world has succeeded at unifying humanists to see the beauty of living in a shared world with shared beliefs and ideals. I guess relatively all ideologies simply become tempered down in the long run and with time. It could be the effect of the world just mellowing down to focus more on living and being and less on justifying why it needs to do so. Good for you, good for the whole planet, I believe.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do a research on contemporary humanism. Why is it a huge improvement from old schools of thought on the ideology?
2. What are the ancient concepts of humanism's primary focus? Do you honestly support those concepts?
3. Find information on humanist philosophers. Be able to talk about them briefly in class.
4. Why is humanism imperfect? What can probably render it perfect?
5. How does humanism justify itself? Be as thorough as you need to be.



What is Humanism?

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Humanism involves the duties of individuals to public welfare. It is a doctrine which emphasizes a man's capacity to realize others through reason. This doctrine rejects the concept of religious and supernatural ideas and it is specifically based on human ability and intellect. Humanists believe in the liberal arts and they believe in humanistic abilities. They are the ones which are concerned with basic interest and the welfare of the society. Their philosophy is governed by man's capacity to fulfill his responsibilities through the use of reason and through the use of his intellect.

Being human is the core element in humanism. Being human involves the use of one's emotions and ones of intellect in order to handle every decision. Both intellect and emotion should work hand in hand in order for a person to have the perfect life, free from any prejudices and restraints. All decisions should be based on both intellect and emotion, because without both we will not be able to make clear and solid decisions.

According to the American Humanist Association, humanism is a rational philosophy which is based on informed science, inspired through art and highly motivated by compassion. This means that humanism involves scientific information through the marriage of art and compassion. Humanity, according to them, is based on art. Everything around us is art and everything has its own beauty. Art is not about perfection but about beauty through perseverance. A piece of art takes shape once the hands of its artist strive for its completion. Hence, everything is worked upon, even the world which took a million years to take shape.

Humanism is based on understanding one's shortcomings and frailties. Being human is not about being perfect or being unrestrained, it is about making mistakes and gaining experiences. As human beings, we should not be afraid to ask help to others. We should never be afraid of communication or to talk about our problems. Everyone has problems and it often takes time for us to find the right answer. Love, success, knowledge and trust are based on years of experience. Once we have learned about life we begin to gain true wisdom.

Paul Kurtz noted that the beginning of true wisdom is through the awareness that human beings can achieve a perfect life through the cultivation of virtues and intelligence. He pointed out that through virtues, intelligence and courage we will eventually be able to gain true wisdom. Humanism is a philosophy based on joyous service that is catered to the greater good of all human beings in this world and to advocate the marriage of science, democracy and reason. Lastly, humanism is based on determination. Human beings strive in order to improve not only their lives but also the lives of their families and the society.

Questions:

- 1) What is humanism according to you?
- 2) Who noted that the beginning of true wisdom is through awareness?
- 3) What group mentioned that humanism is a rational philosophy?
- 4) What are based on years of experience?
- 5) What is the term used to describe people who believe in humanism?



## BEING HUMANE

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As the famous Mahatma Gandhi puts it, “The greatness of humanity is not in being human, but in being humane.” Sometimes I wonder if we are living in a just and humane world. With all the unruly and inhumane incidents happening around us, one cannot stop and think if we are still living in a humane world. When you wake up in the morning and listen to the news, hearing all of these will break you up and make you utter a sigh. You get to hear a lot of reported killings and inhumane treatments wherein most of the time scenes of the crime are being flashed making it too gory for us to spare a glance.

Being humane is an act of compassion involving the inner depths of our hearts. There are some people who are not really moved or affected by other people’s state or condition to the point of just taking them for granted. This is what differentiates us, humans from the animals. But the question lies not on how we show love and concern to the animal species. We are not faced with the dilemma that humans are the most important creatures in the universe. Instead, we are faced with the realization of carrying this tremendous responsibility that we must accept and face; it is the importance of human beings to human beings.

It is true and it is a fact that humans and animal creatures have a lot of differences that are implicit. We’re both living in this nature that we were endowed with but only humans can understand study and challenge nature by means of technology in ways animals cannot. Humans can store knowledge in ways animals cannot. More importantly, we humans were given that task to be in charge of our planet, its environment and all creatures here on earth. Therefore, being humane means being capable and ready to treat others in ways that other animals cannot. It means accepting the fact that it is our role and responsibility to act as stewards of the animals and of our planet.

Yes, being humane is being a sentinel to all that God has created in this universe. Moreover, it means seeing the world through human eyes and from a human perspective. It is to assume the responsibility endowed by our human condition. For me, there is more to it than being humane for it is applying the golden rule-“Do not do to others what you do not want others to do unto you.” That is humanism!” You are not being humane if you do the vice-versa, that is, you do to someone what you would not want someone to do unto you.

In other words, being humane is being kind to others, loving, compassionate and being considerate towards others. In actuality, being humane is being patient and doing things in the right degree and manner. Being humane is being able to take losses and endure insults! It really takes a lot of effort and guts to be humane in all the aspects of life!

Questions for discussion:

1. What does it really mean to be humane?
2. Will you go out of your way to be humane? How will you do it?
3. Is being humane tantamount to bearing and enduring everything for the benefit of others? Why or why not?
4. Have you exercised being humane in all the aspects of your life? Cite those instances.
5. Are you a good steward who is responsible of all humanity? Explain your answer.



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