

The Humanist Focus of Attention

by Frank L. Pasquale

I first became aware of humanism more than 30 years ago through Lin Yutang's *The Importance of Living*.¹ He mentions the term very few times, but I was so taken with the book's attitude, that *humanism* was for me cast in a very positive light. Soon afterwards, I stumbled upon Corliss Lamont's *The Philosophy of Humanism*.² This seemed generally congenial to my way of thinking. Then I got on with "making a living" and thought little more of it for some time.

Several years ago, I took a closer look at humanism. I immersed myself in the philosophy as implemented in several groups and organizations under this banner. But the deeper my immersion, the more dismayed I became. It seemed as though a fine concept had been waylaid, distorted, narrowed, and regrettably marginalized in the process. I began to dig deeper into the words, the ideas, the philosophy, and the institutions associated with it.

Here, I wish to suggest a way of looking at *humanism* and *humanist* that readjusts some of the "modern" strictures applied to these terms. The kernel of my suggestion lies in the recognition of philosophical humanism as a *focus of attention* rather than a definitive metaphysical stance, per se. With this single, and in some respects slight, shift of conception, many things change. There is a shift in humanism's center of gravity and priorities (closer, I think, to where these once were and where they should be). Metaphysics takes its proper place—subordinate to this-worldly concerns, commitments, well-being, and empirical knowledge, but not categorically excluded among all humanists. And some of the barriers erected between many rational, reasonable, and humanistic people are lowered or removed.³

The Problems

Upon revisiting philosophical humanism-as-espoused and becoming more acquainted with humanism-as-implemented, I struggled with several puzzlements, including:

- the attempt to reserve *humanism* for individuals with a definitive and categorically naturalistic stance, in some quarters employing a rather slight lexical convention of a capital "H,"
- the use of "religious humanism" to refer to individuals who are categorically naturalistic, non-theist, or non-supernaturalist in orientation, and
- encounters with many metaphysical *non*-naturalists who speak of themselves as humanists—religious humanists, in fact—and who seemed substantially rational, reasonable, and devoted to many or most principles said by "H"umanists to define their philosophy.

In an effort to make sense of all this, I plunged back into the era of *Humanist Manifesto I*⁴ and beyond, to the etymology of *humanist* and *humanism* (again with the help of Corliss Lamont⁵ as well as Jeaneane Fowler,⁶ Nicholas Walter,⁷ William Schulz,⁸ Ernst Cassirer,⁹ and others). It became apparent that the key to a more satisfactory understanding of these terms—and one that accords better *overall* with contemporary usage—might be found in the earliest use of *humanist*.

The Renaissance figures to whom *humanist* (or *umanista*) was applied represented a *shift of attention* from an obsessive preoccupation with "the divine" to renewed focus—via classical Greek and Roman thought—on "the human." This shift, however, by no means represented a categorical rejection of the divine or an *exclusively* naturalistic metaphysical stance.

To one extent or another, Renaissance thinkers generally found it prudent to remain in the good graces of the Roman Church. Even so, renewed attention to classical preoccupations and

texts led Renaissance humanists to question many things, including some of the Church's teachings and institutional shortcomings (e.g., Petrarch, Valla, Erasmus). For many, whatever metaphysical or theological beliefs they may have held seemed subordinate to their this-worldly focus—and often of little or no substantial relevance to their science or their art (e.g., Alberti, Galileo, da Vinci). However, there was no wholesale abandonment of the metaphysical or theological. It was the *priority* placed on human nature, experience, well-being, and rational inquiry that made them *umanisti*. The same, I think, can be said for a great many philosophical humanists today.

Despite the distillation of a rational and skeptical turn of mind in the 18th century's "Age of Enlightenment," and emergence of the term *humanism* in the 19th, it was not until the 20th century that *humanism* and *humanist* were pried free of their classical, literary, or pedagogical roots. Something happened, something called *Humanist Manifesto I (HM I)*. It was then that humanism became a free-standing (and to some, wholly and exclusively "free-thinking") philosophy. In the process, however, a somewhat tangled lexical web was woven.

The bright young (and predominantly Unitarian) Moderns responsible for *Humanist Manifesto I* wanted to be "religious," yet philosophically naturalist. They wanted "religion," but without any trace of supernaturalism. And they seemed to want to lay claim to *humanism* and *humanist* exclusively for themselves.

Those who formulated *HM I* rendered an invaluable service by framing and drawing attention to humanism as a coherent philosophical stance. But to my mind they also fostered a terrible muddle surrounding such terms as *religion*, *religious*, *humanism*, and *humanist*.¹⁰ They made of "H"umanism a "religion" that categorically rejected all traces of theism or supernaturalism or, indeed, metaphysics. These distinctive usages set them, and the intellectual heirs of *HM I*, off in a philosophical enclave. They erected semantic barriers (and more, barriers of confusion) among philosophical humanists, as well as between "H"umanists and many reasonable, rational human beings who hold substantially similar views. This has contributed to regrettable misrepresentations and marginalization of philosophical humanism in contemporary life.

A Readjustment of Priorities

A good deal of confusion and contention surrounding *humanist* and *humanism* may be overcome by recognizing philosophical humanism, first and foremost, as a *focus of attention* rather than a definitive metaphysical stance. It represents a *priority* placed on this-worldly human affairs and welfare, on our empirical understanding of the natural universe, and on meeting human challenges ethically and responsibly, here and now. It represents an attitude framed by a handful of provisional principles—hypotheses about ways of achieving human well-being and understanding, here and now. *But recognizing this does not categorically exclude all individuals who hold certain additional metaphysical (e.g., "meta-empirical"¹¹ or "theological") ideas from being philosophical humanists.*

I have presented the view summarized in Table 1 to a range of audiences, from religious to non-religious, atheist to agnostic, secular humanist to "H"umanist, Judaic humanist to Unitarian Universalist. Responses have been positive, even among many UUs. The principles should seem familiar. They simply represent a distillation of recurring ideas and commitments expressed by many who speak of themselves as philosophical humanists, both religious and non-religious, today.

Parallels with *Humanist Manifesto III* (published several months after the initial formulation of this summary¹²) will be obvious, but for an equally obvious difference. No explicit, definitive, or exclusive metaphysical position is stated (as in *HM III's* "Humanists

recognize nature as self-existing”). By virtue of a practical focus of attention on this-worldly human experience, knowledge, and well-being, metaphysics is rendered subordinate (or irrelevant or meaningless, whichever individual humanists may choose). But the possibility of being both philosophically humanist and metaphysically religious is reflected.

The defining hallmark of philosophical humanism from this perspective concerns one’s primary commitments and focus of attention rather than one’s metaphysics. As phrased here, humanist principles can be and are embraced by individuals along a spectrum of metaphysical stances. There are non-naturalists (e.g., deists and some pantheists, teleologists, theists, etc.) who may be philosophical humanists by virtue of the fact that they embrace such principles with no less conviction than affirmative naturalists. *As long as additional (metaphysical or meta-empirical) notions do not directly or substantially violate such principles and priorities*, their claim to *humanist* or *humanism* would seem to be every bit as legitimate as philosophical naturalists.

This obviously does not mean that *all* non-naturalists are philosophical humanists, any more than all atheists or agnostics are. Those who present themselves as “theological,” “Christian,” “transcendental,” or “religious humanists” will tend to be relatively liberal in their religiosity or theology. The tenets of fundamentalists, theocrats, theological dogmatists or absolutists will clearly be at odds with such priorities and commitments.

There are those, for example, who speak of (religious) humanism from a clearly (mono)theist, theocentric, or Biblical perspective (e.g., Catholic, Integral). It is argued that a proper focus on “man” cannot be sustained without being anchored in a focus on God or the divine, or that monotheistic faith is necessary for a true understanding of the human or human nature, and so on. This is obviously at the antipodes from naturalistic “religious humanism,” contributing further to the ambiguity of the phrase. The naturalistic usage semantically dilutes *religious*, and the theocentric usage dilutes *humanism*. Purely for the sake of clarity, the best course of action would no doubt be to avoid the phrase altogether and create a more precise and meaningful lexicon. In the meantime, the approach offered here attempts to chart a meaningful course between these two extremes that does minimal semantic violence to *religious* or *humanism*.

These comments appear in a journal called *religious humanism*, representing a range of meanings from naturalistic to meta-empirical to (shall we say, softly) “theological.” I am also aware of the staying power and allure of the words, *religion* or *religious* among some philosophical naturalists. Friends at nearby UU fellowships claim to be resolutely naturalistic, non-theist, non-supernaturalist, *and* “religious,” just as the authors of *HMI* did. Some distill “religion,” through a mistaken gloss of *religio*,¹³ down to a “binding force” among human beings, and nothing more. I admit to wishing, for the sake of clarity and intelligibility, that it were possible to find or create words that offer the apparently irresistible satisfactions of *religion* and *religious*, but distinguish *religious*-S(upernatural) from -M(eta-empirical) from -N(aturalistic) and other gradations in between.¹⁴ This said, to each his own; we simply need to clarify *religion* and *religious* whenever they are used.

The greater concern here is with the habit of using *humanist* (as in many UU fellowships) as a euphemism for a-theist, agnostic, or “ignostic.” My other concern is with the use of “H”umanism or “H”umanist to restrict philosophical humanism to those in a narrow metaphysical band. Such practices have had the unfortunate consequences of sowing conflict and confusion. They have tended to set philosophical humanism off in marginal enclaves. They have sharply divided religious-M from religious-N from non-religious humanists. And they have misrepresented the full breadth of a humanist attitude, focus of attention, and philosophy.

Some Objections, Addressed

A few of my listeners from the naturalistic or secular side have objected that *religion* or *the religious* are terms categorically antithetical to any rational humanism. With the swipe of an unduly broad brush, however, this oversimplifies a vast range of human phenomena and ideas. There are some ideas and phenomena under these headings that are compatible with philosophical humanism and some that are not.

I have encountered substantially rational and reasonable people, self-professed humanists, who hold certain meta-empirical or “theological” beliefs. (And I have heard singularly irrational and unreasonable, as well as in-humanistic, utterances from professed naturalistic humanists.) Indeed, there are many professional scientists who present themselves as deists, theists, pantheists, and so on. The human mind is a wondrously, and sometimes disconcertingly, flexible instrument. Such flexibility is nowhere more in evidence than with respect to matters metaphysical. It is quite possible to be *substantially* logical, skeptical, and naturalistic, on the one hand, while holding fast to notions of an uncaused cause, a universal immanence, or a divine teleological hand *a la* Teilhard de Chardin, on the other—without the latter materially impairing the former.

Separately, when I suggest that adjectives like *naturalistic* or *secular* help make the metaphysical stances of some humanists clearer, some object that this is inherently divisive. It “ain’t necessarily so.” I find that the confusion and narrow metaphysical exclusivity associated with “H”umanism is far more divisive. Outside selected institutional circles, the convention of merely capitalizing the term to reserve it for philosophical naturalists is transparent, meaningless, or objectionable. At best, it results in confusion and misunderstanding; at worst, it smacks of lexical claim-staking. This is compounded by an understandable failure, given the slight nature of the distinction, to consistently adhere to the convention even within “the Humanist movement.”¹⁵ What’s more, the convention is by no means exclusive to naturalistic philosophical humanists; it is frequently used with reference to Renaissance, classical, and other strains of *humanism*.¹⁶

By clearly distinguishing *both* what philosophical humanists share, and do not share, through the terms we use, we conjoin by clarifying. The nouns, humanist or humanism, convey what is primary and what is shared: a common focus of attention and priority placed on this-worldly human affairs, reasoning, well-being, and understanding. Adjectives like *secular*, *naturalistic*, or *religious* (-M, -N, etc.) simply reflect differences among philosophical humanists due to selected additional, but *subordinate*, metaphysical ideas they may hold.

Implications of the Approach

There are many implications that flow from this approach. I wish to touch on only a few of the most important of these here.

First, such an understanding of philosophical humanism reorders priorities as, it seems to me, they should be. This-worldly reasoning and ethics are in the “front seat” and metaphysics in back. Metaphysical speculations or commitments are not dismissed categorically, but are viewed as necessarily subordinate to core humanist commitments. Obsessing and arguing over the *ultimate* truth or untruth of naturalistic, atheistic, agnostic, meta-empirical, or theological stances, displaces the humanist center of gravity. *A commitment to the value of methodological naturalism—e.g., grounding our this-worldly scientific understanding as if philosophical naturalism were ultimately true—can be made by a wide range of people, apart from their ultimate metaphysical speculations or stances.*

The very point of philosophical humanism would seem to be that metaphysical ultimates, however dear to us (in either the affirmative or the negative), must remain subordinate to this-

worldly human concerns if we are to overcome a demonstrated tendency to violate human well-being in the name of other realms, be they imagined, intuited, “deduced,” or “revealed.”

Second, such an approach conforms to the oft'-stated humanist commitment to tolerance and appreciation for reasonable diversity. It simply applies this commitment to a reasonable degree of *metaphysical* diversity! The same can be said concerning varying interests in private or social ritual, congregational or church culture, “spirituality” or “God-talk.” All of these represent preferences or proclivities that may be of considerable personal significance to individuals. But as long as they remain subordinate to humanist priorities, they represent fascinating individual and cultural differences within a full span of philosophical humanism.

Third, battles over whether Unitarian Universalists “are or are not humanist(s)” fade away. Virtually *all* are humanist(s) by virtue of their endorsement of Unitarian Universalist Principles and the kinds of commitments given in Table 1 or in *HM III*. Again, particular individuals, fellowships, and subgroups within fellowships may vary in their subordinate (though personally significant) attraction or aversion to particular forms of speech (e.g., “God-talk”), ritual behavior, congregational life, or metaphysical beliefs or speculations. *Vive la difference*—as long as the Principles remain uppermost in mind and action.

Fourth, the relationship between naturalistic and non-naturalistic humanists is recast. Shared values, priorities, and commitments among secular and religious humanists come to the fore. Subordinate metaphysical and cultural differences remain, and, in fact, are of value as long as they *remain* subordinate.

Secular humanists (like myself) find little, if any, allure in “God-talk,” elaborate ritual associated with our philosophies, Christianesque or other church-culture, “thick” spirituality, or the like. This does *not* mean, of course, that we are immune to the allure of *all* forms of group, ritual, or *inspiral*¹⁷ experience. But we tend to be less prone to, and more skeptical or suspicious of, such proclivities, especially when pronounced. These can and do give way to excessive in-group immersion or devotion, and so, to unethical disregard for out-groups. Socially and metaphysically skeptical secular humanists can provide checks and balances, one might say, *vis a vis* the potential foibles of religiosity—whether naturalistic or not, humanist or not.

By the same token, it is equally possible for secular humanists to become blind to their own group and institutional cultures through excessive or inadequately self-critical absorption in wholesale anti-religiosity, “rationalism,” or particular lines of reasoning.¹⁸ It is quite possible for human beings to produce ideologies and cultures that threaten or violate reasonable human rights, liberties, security, and well-being in the name of Reason, just as we have in the name of God, The Good of All, or Love of Country. Religious humanists can help provide checks and balances *vis a vis* their secular brethren, as well.

Fifth, from this perspective, the inadvisability of the suggestion that philosophical naturalists, particularly “H”umanists, refer to themselves as “Brights” (as endorsed by the American Humanist Association¹⁹) becomes clear. This only brings metaphysical diversions more to the fore, and raises metaphysical barriers among humanists even higher. Indeed, from the perspective offered here, an American *humanist* Association would encompass a range of members from atheist to agnostic to meta-empirical to humanistically theological. But, then, I don’t expect the impossible when it comes to overcoming the human cultural reflex. Our subordinate preferences and proclivities (metaphysical, linguistic, ritual, social) are the stuff that cultures are made of. We are animals that seek comfort in the company of those whose *styles*, as well as substantive commitments, are shared.

Common recognition from our respective cultures that we’re all humanists—and that the shared commitments under that banner are more important than our cultural or metaphysical differences—would suffice. Former President and occasional political philosopher, Bill Clinton,

has noted that “our shared humanity is more important than our interesting differences, and makes those interesting differences possible.”²⁰ Wise words.

Sixth, from this view, the challenge of “building coalitions” with many others on specific ethical, social, and political issues is facilitated. By recognizing the priority of shared commitments with others who are substantially committed to humanist principles, regardless of subordinate metaphysical stances or linguistic or cultural styles, we engender a greater sense of common cause and shared aims with a much wider range of people than has been the case among exclusively or myopically naturalistic humanists or “H”umanists.

Following a talk by Barry Lynn at a recent meeting of the American Humanist Association, a friend and AHA member said that he’d “support this guy any day.” Lynn is, of course, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. His prepared remarks suggested substantial endorsement of most, if not all, of the principles given in Table 1. But an audience member was compelled to question Mr. Lynn’s metaphysical beliefs, seemingly incredulous that Lynn wasn’t “one of us” (i.e., a naturalistic “H”umanist). Lynn reaffirmed his Christian ministerial status, saying that he believed “in a divine purpose to the universe, though not perhaps as a strict theist.”

I turned to my friend and noted that “there are *many* who, like Mr. Lynn, exhibit substantial endorsement of principles we call humanist, but who hold clearly non-naturalistic metaphysical views of many kinds. They may or may not speak of themselves as humanists. But if they do, as long as the latter don’t violate the former, what difference does this make? It’s the shared *focus of attention*, the priorities, and the values, not the metaphysics, that are essential to our reasonable freedoms, our well-being, and our humanism.” He got the message.

Beyond the ranks of self-professed humanists of varying metaphysical orientations, there are *countless* others who are committed to the priorities, principles, and commitments we call *humanist*, but who do not recognize or apply this term to themselves. In the final analysis, our labels, like reasonable diversity of metaphysical notions or cultural proclivities, would seem to be of subordinate concern. It is of little matter whether such people identify themselves as Church of Christ ministers, communitarians, atheists, ethical culturists, Unitarians, skeptics, Buddhists *a la* Dalai Lama, or nothing-in-particular. It is the shared focus, the commitments, and the priority placed on this-worldly human knowledge, well-being, and reasonable rights, freedoms, and responsibilities that are important. These are what most deserve our attention.

Table 1. Contemporary Philosophical Humanism and Humanists

Contemporary (philosophical) humanism

is a philosophy, an orientation, an attitude with a focus of attention on “this-worldly” human affairs and on principles, priorities, and commitments that are provisional but enduring, that make no reference to supernatural, transcendental, or meta-empirical ideas, but which individuals both religious and non-religious can and do embrace as humanists (as long as additional ideas held do not directly violate such principles).

Recurring humanist principles include. . .

- Commitment to human security, well-being, happiness, and fulfillment
- Recognition and acceptance of human responsibility for human welfare (apart from those natural forces over which we have limited or no control)

- Commitment to essential moral/ethical principles and disciplines that prove effective through experience in ensuring human security, well-being, happiness, and fulfillment
- Commitment to reason and empiricism (or scientific method) as our most effective means for yielding knowledge of our world, our universe, and ourselves
- Acceptance of the (ultimate) uncertainty, or finite and provisional nature, of human knowledge
- Affirmation of fundamental human rights and freedoms critical to individual well-being (that do not undermine or violate the reasonable rights, freedoms, and well-being of others)
- Commitment to achieving greater peace and justice, and minimizing violence and cruelty, in human affairs (individually, collectively, globally)
- Wide (but not unlimited) acceptance of, and appreciation for, individual differences and cultural diversity
- Commitment to democratic, non-theocratic state government as the approach most likely to honor and safeguard (reasonable) individual freedoms, human rights, and diversity (of beliefs, behavior, personal lifestyle, cultures)
- Commitment to reasonable and responsible relationships with our physical world/universe and its living inhabitants
- Focus of attention on
 - quality of life
 - human challenges and solutions
 - finding and creating meaning, purpose, value, peace, beauty, love, enjoyment. . . “here and now”

Secular or naturalistic humanists endorse no additional ideas or phenomena lying outside the scope of these principles and the this-worldly focus of attention they represent, and so, affirm. . .

- a broadly skeptical and scientific attitude
- a naturalistic and empirical worldview as either the most reasonable working hypothesis or a definitive metaphysical stance
- non-acceptance of meta-empirical, supernatural, or transcendental realms, forces, beings, processes, or purported “explanations” for any phenomenon (until and unless brought within the realm of nature through sufficient empirical evidence).

Religious humanists affirm certain metaphysical, meta-empirical, transcendental, or theological ideas that are in addition to (but not in direct violation of) these principles, including, for example . . .

- some who hold relatively abstract metaphysical (or meta-empirical) ideas in addition to their humanist priorities (e.g., deists, teleologists, pantheists)
- some who identify themselves with (relatively liberal interpretations and implementations of) organized religious traditions and cultures (Christian, Judaic, etc.), but who substantially embrace humanist principles and a priority on this-worldly human concerns
- some within Asian schools of thought (e.g., Buddhist, Confucian), particularly by virtue of the substantial focus in such traditions on human social, behavioral, and ethical principles.

There are also self-described “religious humanists” who hold a naturalistic worldview, but who employ the terms “religion” and/or “religious” in a broad manner encompassing. . .

- non-supernatural “spiritual” or “transcendent” (i.e., extraordinary) personal or social experience, and/or
- ritual, experiential, and social elements of what might be called *congregational* or *church* culture, and/or
- a general sense of “connectedness” or of “reverence,” gratitude, awe, or “the sacred” with respect to humanity, nature, sentient existence, the universe, etc.
- e.g., many Unitarian Universalists, Ethical Culturists, or “spiritual humanists.”

Notes

1. Lin Yuang, *The Importance of Living*, New York, The John Day Company, 1937.
2. Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, New York, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1986 (1949).
3. I expect that some may complain that what I present here will upset one of the few things that seems relatively stable in contemporary philosophical humanism—i.e., the use and meaning of “Humanism.” Some may stop reading out of an often-voiced weariness of fiddling with definitions while the world burns. I can understand both points of view. But the confusion, marginality, and self-defeating exclusiveness of many of the institutional cultures of contemporary Humanism embolden me to set these concerns aside. A substantial part of the marginality of philosophical humanism seems to me of humanists’ and Humanists’ own making.
4. Frank L. Pasquale, “The Birth of an Oxymoron” (book review of William F. Schulz, *Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism*), *Free Inquiry*, Volume 23, Number 1 (Winter), 2002/2003, pages 66-67.
5. Corliss Lamont, *ibid.*
6. Jeaneane Fowler, *Humanism, Beliefs and Practices.*, Brighton, England, Sussex Academic Press, 1999.
7. Nicholas Walter, *Humanism, Finding Meaning in the Word*, Amherst, New York, Prometheus Books, 1998.
8. William F. Schulz, *Making the Manifesto, The Birth of Religious Humanism*, Boston, Skinner House Books, 2002.
9. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kirsteller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948.
10. One need only look at David A. Noebel’s *Clergy in the Classroom, The Religion of Secular Humanism* (Manitou Springs, Colorado, Summit Press, 2001) to see the continuing legacy, and sorry consequences, of this muddle. See also Frank L. Pasquale, “Religious

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- Humanism' and the Dangers of Semantic Distortion," *Free Inquiry*, Volume 22, Number 4 (Fall), 2002, pages 44-47.
11. *Metaphysical* refers to speculative ideas concerning "ultimate" existence, including processes or phenomena beyond or underlying physical/material nature and its properties. I use *meta-empirical* to refer to abstract speculative notions that lie beyond empirical verification, such as cosmic teleology; the eternity or origin of all that exists; an order, patterning, connectedness, or interdependence in all that exists, and so on. This is in contrast to notions traditionally associated with the *supernatural*, such as spiritual or incorporeal entities; immortal souls or life-after-death personalities; a personal, anthropomorphic, or anthropophilic (human-loving) God, and so on.
 12. *The Humanist*, May-June, 2003, page 13.
 13. Wilfred Cantwell Smith provides one of the more useful summaries of the etymological uncertainties surrounding *religio* and its derivations in *The Meaning and End of Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.
 14. *Religion* now runs an incredibly wide gamut, from naturalistic to supernaturalist, a-theist to theist, liberal to fundamentalist, loose belief-systems to highly organized institutions, and so on. Without qualification or clarification, its utility has become nil. What has long been needed is a more differentiated and meaningful lexicon in place of *religion* and the *religious*, not a further expansion or semantic dilution of "the religious story" as in David E. Bumbaugh's "Toward a Humanist Vocabulary of Reverence," *Journal of Religious Humanism*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1-2 (Winter/Spring), 2001. I am not unmindful of the poetic, affective, or people-binding effects of such offerings, but it also seems that the more these terms are stretched thin, the less they mean.
 15. For example, see The Institute for Humanist Studies' website, where upper and lower case forms are both used.
 16. See, for example, Cassirer, et al., cited previously (Note 9).
 17. I employ *INspirAL* (or *INspirALity*) in place of what has been called "secular spirituality." See "'Religious Humanism' and the Dangers of Semantic Distortion," cited previously (Note 10).
 18. The involvement of many secular thinkers and humanists, such as AHA "Humanist of the Year," Margaret Sanger, in promoting involuntary eugenic sterilization of the "unfit" last century offers a good example of the latter. See, for example, Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak*, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003.
 19. See "AHA Launches Bright Initiative" in *Free Mind*, December 2003/January 2004, page 1.
 20. Presentation to the British Labour Party, 2002.