

The Unfolding of Humanist Manifesto III

Seventy years after the first *Humanist Manifesto** and thirty years after the second, we find ourselves living in a world where many Humanist values and ideals have never been more widely accepted while others have never been more urgently needed. Ideas that were new and shocking in the decades leading up to the first manifesto are now, under various labels, quite commonplace. References to human rights and human dignity, social concern and social justice, global thinking and global inclusiveness, as well as the questioning of beliefs and authorities can be found everywhere. The secularization and democratization of society has expanded around the globe. However, with that change has come growing resistance from religious extremists, totalitarian regimes, and others in response to the underlying Humanist ideals that have been driving this cultural shift. This development makes the humanization of culture more urgent than ever before.

The past seventy years have also seen an increased interest in Humanism per se. The number of Humanist organizations and publications continues to rise. Millions of people now follow the Humanist value system, or *lifestance*, and new books exploring Humanist thought and the history of organized Humanism continue to be published. In this latter category, two are of particular note: *The Genesis of a Humanist Manifesto* by Edwin H. Wilson and *Making the Manifesto* by William F. Schulz, both of which tell the story of the first *Humanist Manifesto*.

In 1933 thirty-four Humanists in the United States came together as signers of *A Humanist Manifesto*, later known as *Humanist Manifesto I*. This declaration—made up of fifteen affirma-

tions on cosmology, biological and cultural evolution, human nature, epistemology, ethics, naturalistic religion, self-fulfillment, and the quest for freedom and social justice—was the first concise articulation of the basic principles, values, and ideals of Humanism as we have come to know it. Though not a technical, philosophic treatise establishing the foundations of Humanism, it did give voice to a *lifestance* that, since the opening of the twentieth century, had emerged out of the traditions of academic philosophy, freethought, and liberal religion in a world transformed by scientific discovery, technological advance, and social upheaval.

Almost from the beginning, however, Humanists saw ways to refine this first effort. As Raymond B. Bragg made clear in his introduction to the document, it had been “designed to represent a developing point of view, not a new creed.” The suggested ideas for improvement were finally brought together in the pages of the *Humanist* magazine on the document’s twenty-fifth anniversary in 1958. Then in 1973, its fortieth anniversary, *Humanist Manifesto II* was released.

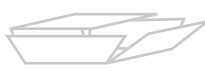
This second manifesto, featuring an introduction by Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson, was written to accommodate the sobering challenges to the original manifesto’s optimism. These challenges had been brought about by World War II; the Holocaust and other atrocities; the spread of communism and the Cold War; the rise of new fanaticisms and the invigoration of old ones; degradation of the environment; the dangers of nuclear annihilation; and other adverse developments. The new manifesto also addressed the leading issues of the 1970s, call-

ing for “a full range of civil liberties in all societies;” the extension of participatory democracy “to the economy, the school, the family, the workplace, and voluntary associations”; “the separation of church and state and the separation of ideology and state”; “elimination of all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin”; universal education; a world community advancing peace, human rights, social justice, and protection of the environment; and “recognition of the common humanity of all people.” As such, *Humanist Manifesto II* was an attempt at an exhaustive statement of all that Humanists think and do as Humanists. It was also a socio-political commentary with a call to action on certain general proposals. Because of this departure from the simple and direct espousal of basic Humanist principles that had characterized *Humanist Manifesto I*, the new document was three times longer.

This level of specificity naturally invited critiques concerning what should have been excluded as well as what shouldn’t have been neglected. So, even though *Humanist Manifesto II* was signed by thousands of people, including a significant

were also made regarding a third manifesto in *Free Mind*, the membership newsletter of the American Humanist Association, with a call for member input and subsequent interactive development of specific provisions over a period of a year and a half. AHA annual conference sessions featured input by a variety of panelists as well as attendees. Through these activities it was determined that the new document should be a basic declaration of values and ideals modeled after the first manifesto, rather than a consensus statement on social policy modeled after the second. It should represent the cutting edge of Humanism, revealing where Humanists are today in order to clarify a Humanist identity and appeal to a broad and global audience.

In the fall of 2001 complete drafts were solicited from several individuals. The drafts received were compared to the previous work, *Humanist Manifesto I*, and to similar existing documents. The common denominators found became the basis for a fresh version that the drafting committee fine tuned and presented to the AHA board of directors in the spring of 2002. The board approved the general direction of the



number of recognized leaders of thought from all over the world, efforts to develop a third manifesto commenced less than a decade later in 1981. Numerous Humanists over the intervening years, some of whom are listed on page fourteen, submitted specific ideas as well as complete drafts.

Then in 1998 the *Humanist* magazine marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Humanist Manifesto II* with a series of articles exploring the foundations of Humanism along with a collection of commentaries by original signers. Proposals

effort and provided critical input. The draft was then revised accordingly and submitted to leading Humanists in the United States and internationally for comment and compared to the 2002 *Amsterdam Declaration* of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. The collected ideas of the entire process were then integrated into the final construction, the end result of over twenty major drafts that incorporated commentary from AHA members and leaders as well as from leaders in allied organizations around the world. The doc-

ument carries the unanimous endorsement of the drafting committee as well as the AHA board of directors.

The purpose of *Humanism and Its Aspirations: Humanist Manifesto III* is to restate the boundaries of Humanism in words that can resonate with the culture we find developing in our new century. It is to provide a simple, direct, and easily understandable summation of the Humanist principles that underlie Humanist ethics, the Humanist commitment to a better world, and the Humanist goal of more fulfilled living. As a distillation of the foundations of the Humanist lifeway as it is being lived and advanced in our time, this new manifesto is intended to clarify and inspire. The tasks of formal philosophical justification and social application are to be the product of future efforts. The same is true for extrapolations as to how people can or should live their lives. Forthcoming issues of the *Humanist* magazine will carry essays that seek to develop and expand the ideas in the new manifesto, providing discussion on the application of Humanist ideals to the real world of people and events.

This third manifesto, like the two that came before it, isn't a binding creed, catechism, or decalogue, but a clarification and development of Humanism as endorsed and advanced by a cross section of Humanists living, thinking, and acting today. And, like its predecessors, it remains subject to clarification, modification, and improvement as times and conditions change.

Drafting Committee

Fred Edwards, chair
Edd Doerr
Tony Hileman
Pat Duffy Hutcheon
Maddy Urken

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Herb Silverman
Maddy Urken
Mike Werner



with gratitude

In looking forward to your agreement that this new statement offers a positive expression of Humanism worthy of your support, we invite your endorsement and encourage you to seek the endorsement of others.

Sign online at www.AmericanHumanist.org or mail your endorsement to the AHA national office.

Isaac Newton once said, "We stand on the shoulders of giants," a statement which sums up the position of the current drafting committee in relation to those who labored in these fields before us as well as with us. From 1981 through 2000, the drafting committee was chaired by Bette Chambers, Vern Bullough, Gordon Gamm, and M.J. Hardman. Gamm further served as a special adviser to the current committee along with Carlton Coon, Suzanne Paul, Howard Radest, Lyle Simpson, Michael Werner, and Florian Wineriter. Special assistance was provided by Roy Speckhardt, who toiled through long and tedious hours of review and served as a conduit for the important input of the AHA staff. The contributions of all were invaluable; the final product couldn't have emerged without them. We are in their debt and thank them for making the work easier.

Humanism and Its Aspirations

Humanist Manifesto III, a successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933*

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifestance of Humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.

We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.

Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the well being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain that it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.

Signatories

We who sign Humanism and Its Aspirations declare ourselves in general agreement with its substance and, while not necessarily endorsing all of its specifics, unreservedly offer it to a candid public.

Philip W. Anderson

Nobel laureate in physics, 1977

Philip Appleman

Poet and distinguished professor emeritus of English, Indiana University

Khoren Arisian

Senior Leader, NY Society for Ethical Culture

Janet Jeppson Asimov

Psychiatrist and science writer

Bill Baird

Reproductive rights pioneer

Frank Berger

Pharmacologist, developer of anti-anxiety drugs

Paul D. Boyer

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1997

Lester R. Brown

Founder and president, Earth Policy Institute

August Brunsman

Executive director, Secular Student Alliance

Owen Chamberlain

Nobel laureate in physics, 1959

Matt Cherry

Executive director, Institute for Humanist Studies

Carlton Coon

Former U.S. Ambassador to Nepal

Paul J. Crutzen

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1995

Richard Dawkins

Charles Simonyi professor, University of Oxford

Pierre-Gilles de Gennes

Nobel laureate in physics, 1991

Johann Deisenhofer

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1988

Riane Eisler

President, Center for Partnership Studies

Edward Ericson

Leader emeritus, Ethical Culture

Roy P. Fairfield

Cofounder, Union Graduate School

Antony Flew

Philosopher

Levi Fragell

President, International Humanist and Ethical Union

Kendyl Gibbons

President, Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

Sheldon Glashow

Nobel laureate in physics, 1979

Babu R. R. Gogineni

Executive director, International Humanist and Ethical Union

Sol Gordon

Sexologist

Herbert A. Hauptman

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1985

Jim Herrick

Editor, the *New Humanist*

Dudley Herschbach

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1986

Fran Hosken

Editor, *Women's International Network News*

Stefan Jonasson

Immediate past president, HUManists

Larry Jones

President, Institute for Humanist Studies

Jone Johnson-Lewis

President, National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union

Gerald A. Larue

Professor emeritus of biblical history and archaeology, University of Southern California

Yuan T. Lee

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1986

Joseph Levee

Board member, Council for Secular Humanism

Ellen McBride

Immediate past president, American Ethical Union

Mario J. Molina

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1995

Lester Mondale

Retired Unitarian Universalist minister and signer of Humanist Manifestos I and II

Henry Morgentaler

Abortion rights pioneer

Stephen Mumford

President, Center for Research on Population and Security

William Murry

President and dean, Meadville-Lombard Theological School

Erwin Neher

Nobel laureate in medicine, 1991

Sara Oelberg

President, HUManists

Indumati Parikh

President, Center for the Study of Social Change, India

Katha Pollitt

Columnist, the *Nation*

Ilya Prigogine

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1977

Howard Radest

Dean emeritus, the Humanist Institute

James Randi

Magician, founder of the James Randi Educational Foundation

Larry Reyka

President, the Humanist Society

Richard J. Roberts

Nobel laureate in medicine, 1993

David Schafer

Retired research physiologist, U.S. Veterans Administration

Eugenie Scott

Executive director, National Center for Science Education

James R. Simpson

Professor of international agricultural economics, Ryukoku University, Japan

Warren Allen Smith

Editor and author

Matthew Ies Spetter

Associate professor in social psychology at the Peace Studies Institute of Manhattan College, NY

Oliver Stone

Academy award-winning filmmaker

John E. Sulston

Nobel laureate in medicine, 2002

John M. Swomley

Professor emeritus of social ethics, St. Paul School of Theology

Robert Tapp

Dean, the Humanist Institute

Henry Taube

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1983

E. Donnell Thomas

Nobel laureate in medicine, 1990

Kurt Vonnegut

Novelist

Sherwin Wine

Founder and president, Society for Humanistic Judaism

All Living Past Presidents of the American Humanist Association

Edd Doerr, 1995–2002

Michael W. Werner, 1993–1994

Suzanne I. Paul, 1992

Lyle L. Simpson, 1981–1984

Bette Chambers, 1973–1979

Lloyd L. Morain, 1969–1972, 1951–1955

Robert W. McCoy, 1966–1968

Vashti McCollum, 1962–1965

The above is a partial list. Signers added after press time will appear on the website of the American Humanist Association. Institutions are listed for identification only.