

HUMANISM. Humanism is a broad category of ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people, based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appealing to universal human qualities - particularly rationality. Humanism is a non-theistic and secular belief. **H**umanists - agnostics, atheists, empiricists, free-thinkers, rationalists and scientific skeptics - are mostly non-religious (but not necessarily, some humanist beliefs are compatible with some religious beliefs.) Humanism upholds reason, ethics and justice, while rejecting super-naturalism, pseudo-science, superstition and authoritarianism. **I**n some areas of the world, humanism finds itself in conflict with religious fundamentalism, especially over the issue of the separation of church and state. Many humanists see religions as superstitious, repressive and closed-minded - while religious fundamentalists may see humanism as a threat to the values set out in religious texts such as the Talmud, the Bible and the Qur'an.

The International Humanist and Ethical Union
Minimum Statement (*abbreviated*):

'Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right to give meaning to their lives. It stands for the building of a humane society through an ethic based on human values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry. It is non theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.'

life stance

A life stance is a person's relationship with what they accept as being of ultimate importance. The term covers both religions and alternatives.

It was introduced to ensure people with a life stance other than a traditional religion were not disadvantaged by discriminatory terminology.

In countries where laws give rights to religions, the secular life stance often has become legally recognised as equivalent to a religion.

ag·nos·tic

someone who believes it is impossible to know whether or not God exists; agnostics could be convinced of God's existence by suitable proof

free-think·er

one who refuses to accept established views or teachings - especially on religion - and forms opinions as a result of independent inquiry

a·the·ist

somebody who does not believe in God, deities, Saints, miracles, scriptures and the paranormal; atheists are convinced that a God does not exist

ra·tion·a·list

in epistemology (study of the nature of knowledge) rationalists appeal to reason; truth is not sensory and intuitive, but logical and academic

em·pi·ri·cist

empiricists believe knowledge is derived from experience, observation and experiment, rather than intuition, belief, revelation or scripture

sci·en·tif·ic skep·tic

scientific skepticism examines theories that seem to be beyond mainstream science, rather than the ones usually discussed by scientists