Origine, Meaning & Development of Humanism
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The term Humanism has been derived from Latin humanus, "Human"; of homo, "man", homines, "mankind", and it was often regarded as the characteristic attitude of the Renaissance in Western Europe. The Greek and Roman classical writers regularly distinguished the 'human' or 'humane' on the one hand from the bestial, and on the other hand from the divine; but in making the latter contrast they usually stressed some pathetic aspect of the human, such morality or fallibility.

The word "humanism" has a number of meanings, and because authors and speakers often don't clarify which meaning they intend, those trying to explain humanism can easily become a source of confusion. Fortunately, each meaning of the word constitutes a different type of humanism - the different types being easily separated and defined by the use of appropriate adjectives. So let me summarize the different varieties of humanism in this way.

**Literary Humanism** is a devotion to the humanities or literary culture.

**Renaissance Humanism** is the spirit of learning that developed at the end of the middle ages with the revival of classical letters and a renewed confidence in the ability of human beings to determine for themselves truth and falsehood.

**Cultural Humanism** is the rational and empirical tradition that originated largely in ancient Greece and Rome, evolved throughout European history, and now constitutes a basic part of the western approach to science, political theory, ethics, and law.
Philosophical Humanism is any outlook or way of life centered on human need and interest. Sub-categorics of this type include Christian Humanism and Modern Humanism.

Christian Humanism is defined by Webster's Third New International Dictionary as "a philosophy advocating the self-fulfillment of man within the framework of Christian principle". This more human oriented faith is largely a product of the Renaissance and is a part of what made up Renaissance Humanism.

Modern Humanism also called Naturalistic Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Democratic Humanism is defined by one of its leading proponents, Corliss Lamont, as "a naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion". Modern Humanism has a dual origin, both secular and religious, and these constitute its sub-categories.

Secular Humanism is an outgrowth of 18th century enlightenment rationalism and 19th century free-thought. Many secular groups, such as the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism and the American Rationalist Federation, and many otherwise unaffiliated academic philosophers and scientists, advocate this philosophy.

Religious Humanism emerged out of Ethical culture, Unitarianism, and Universalism. Today, many Unitarian-Universalist congregations and all Ethical Culture societies describe themselves as humanist into existence.
The most critical irony in dealing with Modern Humanism is the inability of its advocates to agree on whether or not this worldview is religious. Those who see it as philosophy are the Secular Humanists while those who see it as religion are Religious Humanists. This dispute has been going on since the early years of this century when the secular and religious traditions converged and brought Modern Humanism into existence.

Secular and Religious Humanists both share the same worldview and the same basic principles. This is made evident by the fact that both Secular and Religious Humanists were among the signers of Humanist Manifesto I in 1933 and Humanist Manifesto II in 1973. From the standpoint of philosophy alone, there is no difference between the two. It is only in the definition of religion and in the practice of the philosophy that Religious and Secular Humanists effectively disagree.

The definition of religion used by Religious Humanists is a functional one. Religion is that which serves the personal and social needs of a group of people sharing the same philosophical worldview.

To serve personal needs, Religious Humanism offers a basis for moral values, an inspiring set of ideals, methods for dealing with life's harsher realities, a rationale for living life joyously, and an overall sense of purpose.

To serve social needs, Humanist religious communities (such as Ethical Culture societies and many Unitarian Universalist churches) offer a sense of belonging, an institutional setting for the moral education of children, special holidays shared with like-minded people, a unique ceremonial life, the
performance of ideologically consistent rites of passage (weddings, child welcomings, coming of age celebrations, funerals, and so forth), an opportunity for affirmation of one's philosophy of life, and a historical context for one's ideas.

Religious Humanists maintain that most human beings have personal and social needs that can only be met by religion (taken in the functional sense I just detailed.) They do not feel that one should have to make a choice between meeting these needs in a traditional faith context versus not meeting them at all. Individuals who cannot feel at home in traditional religion should be able to find a home in non-traditional religion.

I was once asked by a reporter if this functional definition of religion did not amount to taking away the substance and leaving only the superficial trappings. My answer was that the true substance of religion is the role it plays in the lives of individuals and the life of the community. Doctrines may differ from denomination to denomination, and new doctrine may replace old ones, but the purpose religion serves for PEOPLE remains the same. If we define the substance of a thing as that which is most lasting and universal, then the function of religion is the core of it.

Religious Humanists, in realizing this, make sure that doctrine is never allowed to subvert the higher purpose of meeting human needs in the here and now. This is why Humanist child welcoming ceremonies are geared to the community and Humanist wedding services are tailored to the specialized needs of the wedding couple. This is why Humanist memorial services focus, not on
saving the soul of the dear departed, but on serving the survivors by giving them a memorable experience related to how the deceased was in life. This is why Humanists don’t proselytize people on their death beds. They find it better to allow them to die as they have lived, undisturbed by the agendas of others.

Finally, Religious Humanism is “faith in action.” In his essay “The faith of a Humanist.” UU Minister Kenneth Phifer declares -

Humanism teaches us that it is immoral to wait for God to act for us. We must act to stop the wars and the crimes and the brutality of this and future ages. We have powers of a remarkable kind. We have a high degree of freedom in choosing what we will do.

Humanism tells us that whatever our philosophy of the universe may be, ultimately the responsibility for the kind of world in which we live rests with us.

Now, while Secular Humanists may agree with much of what religious Humanists do, they deny that this activity is properly called “religious”. This is not a mere semantic debate. Secular Humanists maintain that there is so much in religion deserving of criticism that the good name of Humanism should not be tainted by connection with it.

Secular Humanists often refer to Unitarian Universalists as “Humanists not yet out of the church habit”. But Unitarian-Universalists sometimes counter that a secular Humanist is simply an “Unchurched Unitarian”.

Probably the most popular example of the Secular Humanist world view in recent years was the controversial author Salman Rushdie. Here is what he said on ABC's "Nightline" on February 13, 1989, in regard to his novel The Satanic Verses.

The Secular Humanist tradition is a tradition of defiance, a tradition that dates back to ancient Greece. One can see, even in Greek mythology, Humanist themes that are rarely, if ever, manifested in the mythologies of other cultures. And they certainly have not been repeated by modern religions. The best example here is the character Prometheus.

Prometheus stands out because he was idolized by ancient Greeks as the one who defined Zeus. He stole the fire of the gods and brought it down to earth. For this he was punished. And yet he continued his defiance amid his tortures. This is the root of the Humanist challenge to authority.

The next time we see a truly heroic Promethean character in my mythology it is Lucifer in John Milton's Paradise Lost. But now he is the Devil. He is evil. Whoever would defy God must be wickedness personified. That seems to be a given of traditional religion. But the ancient Greeks didn't agree. To them, Zeus, for all his power, could still be mistaken.

Imagine how shocked a friend to mine was when I told her my view of "God's moral standards". I said, "If there were such a god, and these were indeed his ideal moral principles, I would be tolerant. After all, God is entitled to his own opinions!"

Only a Humanist is inclined to speak this way. Only a Humanist can suggest that, even if there
be a god, it is Ok to disagree with him, her, or it. In Plato's Euthyphro, Socrates shows that God is not necessarily the source of good, or even good himself. Socrates asks if something is good because God ordains it, or if God ordains it because it is already good. Yet, since the time of the ancient Greeks, no mainstream religion has permitted such questioning of God's will or made a hero out of a disobedient character. It is Humanists who claim this tradition.

After all, much of Human progress has been in defiance of religion or of the apparent natural order. When we deflect lightening or evacuate a town before a tornado strikes, we lessen the effects of so called "acts of God". When we land on the Moon we defy the Earth's gravitational pull. When we seek a solution to the AIDS crisis, we, according to Jerry Falwell, thwart "God's punishment of homosexuals".

Politically, the defiance of religious and secular authority has led to democracy, human rights, and even the protection of the environment. Humanist make no apologies for this. Humanists twist no biblical doctrine to justify such actions. They recognize the Promethean defiance of their response and take pride in it. For this is part of the tradition.

Another aspect of the Secular Humanist tradition is skepticism. Skepticism's historical exemplar is Socrates. Why Socrates? Because, after all this time, he still stands out alone among all the famous saints and sages from antiquity to present. Every religion has its sage. Judaism has Moses. Zoroastrianism has Zarathustra, Buddhism has the Buddha, Christianity has Jesus, Islam has
Mohammad, Mormonism has Joseph Smith, and Bahai has Baha-u-lah. Every one of these individuals claimed to know the absolute truth. It is Socrates, alone among famous sages, who claimed to know Nothing. Each devised a set of rules or laws, save Socrates. Instead, Socrates gave us a method - a method of questioning the rules of others, of cross-examination. And Socrates didn't die for truth, he died for rights and the rule of law. For these reasons, Socrates is the quintessential skeptical Humanist. He stands as a symbol, both Greek rationalism and the Humanist tradition that grew out of it. And no equally recognized saint or sage has joined his company since his death.

Because of the strong Secular Humanist identity with the images of Prometheus and Socrates, and equally strong rejection of traditional religion, the Secular Humanist actually agrees with Tertullian- who said:

"What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?"

That is, Secular Humanists identify more closely with the rational heritage symbolized by ancient Athens than with the faith heritage epitomized by ancient Jerusalem.

But don't assume from this that Secular Humanism is only negative. The positive side is liberation, best expressed in these words of Robert G. Ingersall:

When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The
dungeon was flooded with light, and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust, I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world, not even in infinite space. I was free-free to think, to express my thoughts-free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses. free to spread imagination's wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself.... I was free! I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds.

Enough to make a secular Humanist shout "hallelujah!"

The fact that Humanism can at once be both religious and secular presents a paradox of course, but not the only such paradox. Another is that both Religious and Secular Humanism place reason above faith, usually to the point of eschewing faith altogether. The dichotomy between reason and faith is given emphasis in Humanism, with Humanists taking their stand on the side of reason. Because of this, Religious Humanism should not be seen as an alternative faith, but rather as an alternative way of being religious.

These paradoxical features not only require a unique treatment of Religious Humanism in the study of world religions, but also help explain the continuing controversy, both inside and outside the Humanists movement, over whether Humanism is a religion at all.

The paradoxes don't end here. Religious Humanism is usually without a god, without a belief
10

in the supernatural, without a belief in an afterlife, and without a belief in a "higher" source of moral values. Some adherents would even go so far to suggest that it is a religion without "belief" of any kind—knowledge based on evidence being considered preferable. Furthermore, the common notion of "religious knowledge" as knowledge gathered through nonscientific means is not generally accepted in Religious Humanist epistemology.

Because both Religious and Secular Humanism are identified so closely with cultural humanism, they readily embrace modern science, democratic principles, human rights, and free inquiry. Humanism's rejection of the notions of sin and guilt, especially in relation to sexual ethics, puts it in harmony with contemporary sexology and sex education as well as aspects of humanistic psychology. And Humanism's historic advocacy of the secular state makes it another voice in the defense of church/state separation.

All these features have led to the current charge of teaching "the religion of secular humanism" in the public schools.

The most obvious point clarify in this context is that some religious hold to doctrines that place their adherents at odds with certain features of the modern world which other religions do not. For example, many biblical fundamentalists, especially those filling the ranks of the "Religious Right," reject the theory of evolution. Therefore, they see the teaching of evolution in a science course as an affront to their religious sensibilities. In defending their beliefs from exposure to ideas inconsistent with
them, such fundamentalists label evolution as "humanism" and maintain that exclusive teaching of it in the science classroom constitutes a breach in the Jeffersonian wall of separation between church and state.

It is indeed true that Religious Humanists, in embracing modern science, embrace evolution in the bargain. But individuals within mainline Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism also embrace modern science—and hence evolution. Evolution happens to be the state of the art in science today and is appropriately taught in science courses. That evolution has come to be identified with Religious Humanism but not with mainline Christianity or Judaism is a curious quirk of politics in North America. But this is a typical feature of the whole controversy over humanism in the schools.

Other courses of study have come to be identified with Humanism as well, including sex education, values education, global education and even creative writing. Today Christian today's "situation ethics" was invented by 1974 Humanist of the Year Joseph Fletcher. But situational considerations have been an element of Western jurisprudence for at least 2,000 years! Again, Secular and Religious Humanists, being in harmony with current trends, are quite comfortable with all of this, as are adherents of most major religious. There is no justification for seeing these ideas as the exclusive legacy of Humanism. Furthermore, there are independent secular reasons why schools offer the curriculum that they do. A basis in favour of "the religion of secular humanism" has never been a factor in their development and implementation.
The charge of Humanist infiltration into the public schools seems to be the product of a confusion of cultural humanism and Religious Humanism. Though Religious Humanism embraces cultural humanism, this is no justification for separating out cultural humanism, labeling it as the exclusive legacy of a nontheistic and naturalistic religion called Religious Humanism, and thus declaring it alien. To do so would be to turn one's back on a significant part of one's culture and enthrone the standards of biblical fundamentalism as the arbiter of what is and is not religious. A deeper understanding of Western culture would go a long way in clarifying the issues surrounding the controversy over humanism in the public schools.

Once we leave the areas of confusion, it is possible to explain, in straightforward terms, exactly what the modern Humanist philosophy is about. It is easy to summarize the basic ideas held in common by both Religious and Secular Humanists.

These ideas are as follows:

1. Humanism is one of those philosophies for people who think for themselves. There is no area of thought that a Humanist is afraid to challenge and explore.

2. Humanism is a philosophy focused upon human means for comprehending reality. Humanists make no claims to possess or have access to supposed transcendent knowledge.

3. Humanism is a philosophy of reason and science in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore,
when it comes to the question of the most valid means for acquiring knowledge of the world, Humanists reject arbitrary faith, authority, revelation, and altered states of consciousness.

4. Humanism is a philosophy of imagination. Humanists recognize that intuitive feelings, hunches, speculation, flashes of inspiration, emotion, altered states of consciousness, and even religious experience, while not valid means to acquire knowledge, remain useful sources of ideas that can lead us to new ways of looking at the world. These ideas, after they have been assessed rationally for their usefulness can then be put to work, often as alternate approaches for solving problems.

5. Humanism is a philosophy for the here and now, Humanists regard human values as making sense only in the context of human life rather than in the promise of a supposed life after death.

6. Humanism is a philosophy of compassion. Humanist ethics is solely concerned with meeting human needs and answering human problems for both the individual and society and devotes no attention to the satisfaction of the desires of supposed theological entities.

7. Humanism is a realistic philosophy. Humanists recognize the existense of moral dilemmas and the need for careful consideration of immediate and future consequences in moral decision making.
8. Humanism is in tune, with the science of today. Humanists therefore recognize that we live in a natural universe of great size and age, that we evolved on this planet over a long period of time, that there is no compelling evidence for a separable "soul", and that human beings have certain built-in needs that effectively form the basis for any human-oriented value system.

9. Humanism is in tune with today's enlightened social thought. Humanists are committed to civil liberties, human rights, church-state separation, the extension of participatory democracy not only in government but in the workplace and education, an expansion of global consciousness and exchange of products and ideas internationally and an open-ended approach to solving social problems, an approach that allows for the testing of new alternatives.

10. Humanism is in tune with new technological developments. Humanists are willing to take part in emerging scientific and technological discoveries in order to exercise their moral influence on these revolutions as they come about, especially in the interest of protecting the environment.

11. Humanism is, in sum, a philosophy for those in love with life. Humanists take responsibility for their own lives and relish the adventure of being part of new discoveries, seeking new knowledge exploring new options. Instead of finding solace in prefabricated answers to the
great questions of life. Humanists enjoy the open-endedness of a quest and the freedom of
discovery that this entails.

Though there are some who would suggest that this philosophy has always had a limited and
eccentric following, the facts of history show otherwise. Among the modern adherents of Humanism
have been Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood and 1957 Humanist of the Year of
the American Humanist Association; humanistic psychology pioneers Carl Rogers and Abraham
Maslow, also Humanists of the Year; Albert Einstein, who joined the American Humanist Association in
the 1950s; Bertrand Russell, who joined in the 1960s; civil rights pioneer A. Philip Randolph who was
the 1970 Humanist of the Year, and futurist R. Buckminster Fuller, Humanist of the Year in 1969.

The United Nations is a specific example of Humanism at work. The first Director-General of
UNESCO, the UN Organization Promoting Education, Science and Culture, was the 1962 Humanist of
the Year Julian Huxley, who practically drafted UNESCO'S charter by himself. The first Director
General of the World Health Organization was the 1959 Humanist of the Year Brock Chisholm. One
of this organization's greatest accomplishments has been the wiping of smallpox from the face of the
earth. And the first Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organization was British Humanist
John Boyd Orr.

Meanwhile, Humanists, like 1980 humanist of the Year Andrei Sakharov, have stood up for
human rights wherever such rights are suppressed, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem fight for
women's rights, Mathilde Krim battle the AIDS epidemic, and Margaret Atwood is one of the world's most outspoken advocates of literary freedom- humanists all.1

Encyclopaedia Britanica:

Humanism, the attitude of mind which attaches primary importance to man and to his faculties affairs, temporal aspirations and well being (from Latin humanus, "Human"; of homo, "man", homines, "mankind".), often regarded as the characteristic attitude of the Renaissance (q.v.) in western Europe. The Greek and Roman classical writers regularly distinguished the human or humane, on the one hand from the bestial and on the other hand from the divine; but in making the latter contrast they usually stressed some pathetic aspect of the human, such as mortality or fallibility.

Medieval Christianity, whoever, suggested that man's life on earth is significant only insofar as it affected his soul's expectation of God's mercy after death, and it was against this belittling of his natural condition that the humanists of the Renaissance asserted the intrinsic value of man's life before death and the greatness of his potentialities. As ecclesiastical influence waned the protest of humanism was turned against secular orthodoxies that subordinated man to the abstract concepts of political or biological theory.

In the 20th century some new senses were given to the word humanism. F.C.S. Schiller (1864-1937) took it as the special name of his own version of pragmatism (q.v.) maintaining that all

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philosophic understanding stems from human activity and re-affirming Protagoras' contention that

"Man is the measure" against what he called the "intellectualist" philosophies, whether represented by

Plato, by Hume or by the idealists of his own time. The humanism of Irving Babbit (q.v.) was very
different, being a reaction in favour of classical order against romanticism and naturalism, not only in
their literary but also in their wider aspects.2

The Encyclopaedia Americana:

(1) That phase of Renaissance which consisted in a renewed study of the so-called
humanistics. Humanism had its source in Italy, which had all times maintained a continuous tradition
of it ancient greatness. Furthermore, Italy was the nearest of the Civilised Western countries to the
Empire of the East, and so it was to Italy that that the Byzantine scholars fled when their country fell
under Turkish dominion. Much before this, however, the Italian scholars had begun to set a high price
on the remains of ancient learning. Petrarch (1304-74), and Boccaccio (1313-75) (q.q.v.) were both
more highly esteemed by their contemporaries for their Latin writings than for their much effort works.
Boccaccio indeed was familiar with Greek as well as with Latin.

The definitive introduction of Greek into Italy, however took place in 1391, when Michael
Chrysoloras, being on his way through Florence on a mission from the emperor of Byzantium was
induced to settle there and teach Greek. After him came Johannes Bessarion, Theodorus Gaza,
Johannes Argyropoulus and Demeritus Chalcondylas, who had left the menace of the Turks or on

2. Encyclopedi a Britannica, V. 11, P. 876
account of the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The humanism of all northern countries, that of France had Italian origin, and may be side to have received its first great impulse from the invasion of Naples by Charles VIII in 1494. It owed much, however, to the influence of perhaps the greatest of all the scholars of the Renaissance of Dutchman Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536). Erasmus also played an important part in British humanism. Humanism in England was at once a literary debtor and a disciple of Patrarch and Boccaccio. In the reign of Henry V. Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, was a patron of learning in the Italian sense and gatherd around him a coterie of English and Italian scholars. However, British humanism first became definitely established by Thomas Linacre (1460-1524) William Grocyn (1446-1519), and William Latimer. These three friends made secure the hold which humanism had already obtained on oxford, so that British humanism became able to meet that of Italy on even terms. Through Colet (1467-1515) the pupil of Linacre and Grocyn, the humanistic movement led to the foundation of the great schools of England. Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), another pupil of Lanacre and Grocyn, did much to break down the opposition to Greek at Oxford. More was also an ardent platonist, as is shown by his famous book the 'Utopia', which was patterned after the 'Republic' of Plato. Greek was established at cambridge through the efforts of Erasmus and Jhon Fisher (1469-1535), bishop of Rochester. The humanism established in England by these men spread throughout society, and paved the way for the great Enlizabethian period of literature and culture.
The word "humanism" is often used for that theory of education which claims that a study of the classics is the best means for a well-rounded and broad culture. It often takes the form of a protest against the scrappiness of a training based on a too exclusive devotion to natural science.

"Humanism" is sometimes used to designate that type of philosophical view which makes man the measure of all things. Its chief contemporary exponent is F.C.S. Schiller of Oxford.

Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of literature:

The learning or cultural impulse that is characterized by a revive of classical sprit, and a shirt of emphasis from religious to secular concern that flowered during the Renaissance.

Renaissance humanism is traceable to the 14th century Italian poet Petrarch, whose scholarship and enthusiasm for classic Latin writings ("The humanitics") gave great impetus to a movement that eventually spread from Italy to all of Western Europe. The diffusion of humanism was facilitated by the universal use of Latin and by the imitation of movable type. Although humanism gradually became identified with class room studies of the classics, it more properly embraced any attitude that exalted man's relationship to god, free will, and human superiority over nature.

The New Penguin Encyclopedia:

"Humanism historically, a movement that arose with the Italian Renaissance, in the writings of Ficino, Pico and later Erasmus and More. The humanists drew on classical literature

4. Marrian Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature, P-569.
(Particularly that of Greece) and emphasized the centrality of human achievements and potential, in opposition to many of the claims of dogmatic theology and science."

Chamber's Encyclopaedia:

"Thus the word Humanism came to present not only a system of education based on the Greek and Latin classics, but also any system of thought which set out to exalt or defend man in his relation with God, with nature, and with society."

The American people Encyclopaedia:

"Humanism is a term generally implying practical interest in humanity. Man is essentially a doer, not a thinker, and knowledge must therefore have as its main object the solving of problems pertaining to humanity, the humanist declared. This school of thought developed in the 15th century and was born of opposition of scholasticism, the main concern of which, claimed the humanists, was with abstraction, such as God, religion etc." 

Encyclopaedia of Social Science:

"That the word Humanism was appropriated by a famous literary and intellectual movement of the Renaissance, was more or less of a historical accident, but that it should be also applied to several other philosophic movements was only natural. For it is clearly a suitable term to characterize any view of the world for which humanity is the central object: and as such views are numerous, it

7. Chicago, 1955, V. X.
speedily acquires a plurality of senses. Their common point of interest, however, is always the human aspect, as opposed to superhuman or the merely natural. The most fundamental formulation of philosophic humanism is still to be found in the dictum of Protagoras that 'Man is the Measure of Everything'. This formula lays the sharpest stress on the relativity of all knowledge to human capacity.

The Humanist outlook:

"Humanism is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'any system or action which is concerned with 'merely' human interests'. The point of the word 'merely' here is that it excludes theology. The early humanists, who took Erasmus for their master, were believers in Christianity: but they did not think it right to apply religious tests to every form of intellectual activity. In particular, they attached an independent value to the study of the languages, literature, history and mythology of ancient Greece and Rome: it is for this reason, indeed, that classical studies still go by the name of the "humanities". At the same time they took the first step toward freeing the human mind from religious control.

Freedom of thought and speech was a form of resistance to authority. It rested on the principle for which Prof. Flew argues that one should not be required to accept as dogma what is known to be true. The adherents to this movement were not nationalists in the philosophical sense of the term:

8. New York, 1937, V. VII.
they had confidence in the power of human reason, but they did not believe that reason alone, unaided by observation, could discover how the world worked. This open critical spirit has continued to be the distinctive mark of the humanists. The hostility of the humanists to rigid and uncompromising religious dogmas was not evinced only in their fidelity to natural sciences, it extended also to questions of human conduct. This did not mean that their moral principles were necessarily different from those who were held by their religious antagonists. The difference lay in their denying that morality either had a religious basis or needed a religious sanction. 

Mackenzia, J.S.: Lectures on Humanism:

"Humanism is the point of view which regards human life as an independent centre of interest, or, in, in old Greek phraseology, the 'helm' by which the universe is steered. In this sense, I contrast it with the more familiar term 'naturalism' – the attempt to understand human life in the light of the forces that operate in the world around it – and also with supernaturalism' that which seeks for the explanation of the world in supernatural powers. From both these points of views, the course of human life is opt to appear in the phrase of Mr. Balfour, as a 'brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets': whereas, from the point of view of humanism, it is only by reference to man's life that the rest of the universe gains dignity and significance. Humanism may be described as the attitude of mind which seeks the key to the world in the life of man, or at any rate, the key to man's

life within himself. As Bishop Berkeley says "human mind and other minds like man's, are the only things that really exist, and consequently, in studying man we are truly studying everything." 10


"Humanism may be defined as an integrated system of human meaning, goals, and values, and harmonious programme of fulfilment, individual and collective. It seeks to clarify and enrich man's goals, values and ideals and achieve his full humanness through bringing him in ever deeper and more intimate kinship and harmony with the surrounding life, society and cosmos. Humanism rests on 'value-realism' which is not an abstract nation but involves the concrete fulfilment of human life and potentialities that is itself invested with the highest values by, and for man's self. Mankind's universal experience at the level of both the self and society is that the real value of human fulfilment - the aim of all humanists is supreme ☆☆☆". 11

Ralph Barton Percy: The Humanity of man:

" - Humanism is essentially a philosophy expressing a reaction against the unnatural stress ascotism places on self-denial. It puts its trust in desire and enjoys life with a good conscience. It cultivates the art of happiness. This does not mean that Humanism lacks discipline, but that its self control is constructive and justified by fruitfulness. Humanism finds no virtue whatever in self-denial and self-torture. It finds the good things of life to spring spontaneously from an original fund of instinct.


enriched by growth and social intercourse. Humanism is a creed dedicated to man. It idealizes man without divorcing him from nature. Its object is existent man taken in respect of the faculties and achievements which dignify him. Humanism may or may not substitute for religion. It is consistent with theism, but does not degrade man in comparison with God or replace man by God as the only Being worthy of reverence that which dignifies man must be something granted to him by the grace and condescension of another Being. It will not suffice to say that man is a mere receptacle, a beneficiary of salvation ☆☆☆.

Humanism is committed to accepted human nature and is therefore obliged to taken the bad with the good and so construct a supreme concept of nature which will embrace both the good and the evil as these appear from man's limited point of view ☆☆☆".

Crane Brinton: Shaping of the Modern Mind

"☆☆☆ They (the humanists) believed that man is a measure of all things and that each man is a measure for himself. The tag word is 'individualism' — these men were great individualists as opposed to the timid conformists of the Middle Ages. They were men who dared to be themselves, because they trusted their own natural powers, in some thing inside themselves ☆☆☆". 12

After going through these definitions carefully, we will now discuss Humanism at length and will critically analyse the various social, political, and emotional factors which worked together to give birth

to the most multi-faceted interesting and complex philosophic ideology - Humanism.

Humanism is the philosophical and literary movement which originated in Italy in the second half of the fourteenth century and diffused into the countries of Europe, coming to constitute one of the factors of modern thought and culture. Humanism was, like its counterpart in religion - Protestantism, the basic aspect of the Renaissance, and precisely that aspect through which Renaissance thinkers wanted to reintegrate man into the world of nature and history and to interpret him in this respect. In this sense, the term Humanism derives from 'humanites' which at the time of Cicero meant the education of man as such - the education favoured by those who considered the liberal arts to be instruments, that is, disciplines proper to man which differentiate him from the other animals. The humanists held that through classical letters, the "rebirth" of a spirit that man has possessed in the Classical Age and has lost in the Middle Ages could be realised - a spirit of freedom that provides justification for man's claim of rational autonomy, allowing him to see himself involved in nature and history and capable of making them his realm. This "return to antiquity" did not consist in a simple repetition of the ancient past but in revival and development of capacities and powers that the ancients possessed and exercised, but which had been lost in the Middle Ages. The humanists rejected the medieval heritage and chose that of the classical world. The privilege that they accorded to the humanities - poetry, rhetoric, history, ethics and politics - was found on the conviction that these disciplines alone can educate man as such and can put him in a position to exercise freedom.
and to understand the cosmos. This revival of the classics was first started in the great age of Greece by adopting Greek thought in Roman education. The reawakening with which Petrarch, who can be called the forefather of Humanism, retraced the classics and the qualities of intelligence and memory which he displayed interpreting them are unequalled by his predecessors. The richness and ease of his style and the elegant fluency of his Latin were also quite novel features. Petrarch shun all systematic and dogmatic doctrine arbitrarily imposed on man - whether it be scholastic philosophy, law or even political services and discipline. He, like a true humanist, asserted his freedom of choice and of initiative. This new doctrine which recognised man's importance in this world, giving him full freedom to choose and select guided by his own intellect and judgement - a freedom never granted to man till that time - opened up vast prospects for Petrarch's contemporaries and they traversed them with vigour and sincerity. Calling Petrarch their master, they passed on his message to coming generations. It was a message of freedom and individuality - the chief and basic concepts of Humanism. This message of Petrarch and his successors acquired new dimensions during the 14th century: and Florence, the literary center of Italy, became the center for this new learning also. It was by no accident that Italy became at once the home of the Renaissance and the cradle of modern thought. It was more ripe for this humanistic mobilization because of two reasons: Firstly, it was in Italy chiefly that the connection with antiquity had been preserved, and when the literature of antiquity once more saw the light, the Italians were able to make it their own in a quite special and independent
manner, since it was the work of their own past, flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone. The Italians on
visaged the Greek literature - which in the fifteenth century became once more the object of
enthusiastic study. The great importance for the history of culture of this general return to the
literature of antiquity - to the study of antique history, philosophy and poetry - was that it revealed to
men the existence outside the pale of the church, of a human intellectual life, following its own laws
and possessing its own history. Secondly, it was owing to the historical circumstances of Italy that this
new philosophy flourished and became so popular there: The partition into many small states which
were the arenas of continual political struggles, during which usually no storm was left unturned which
could lead to attainment and maintenance of power, brought about the dissolution of the social order
of the Middle Ages and the a general inclination towards - Humanism.

Thus, in the first half of the fifteenth century, this new philosophy spread to all the parts of Italy
to such an extent that eventually Humanism and Italian culture became synonymous. However, since
Petrarch’s school was not merely Italian, humanistic learning developed outside Italy as well, although
its growth was slower, and more fraught with obstacles. This humanistic movement outside Italy —
though, basically Italian took the shape of an independent product, and later, at the very time when
Italian Humanism was losing impetus Leufre and Bude in France, Colet and More in England, and
above all Erasmus gave a European significance to Humanism. It was a long way from Petrarch to
Erasmus, and along the road new objectives were discovered and attained, in which at least the
names of L. Valla, G. Ponlano and Aldo Manuzio must be mentioned.

However, back to earlier times: gradually Humanism gained more and more impetus in and outside Italy; so much so that it did not merely, remain a 'school of thought' or a 'philosophy' - it became a revolt like protestantism, against the double standard of society and religion, and it may aptly of the Renaissance. Crane Brinton says in his 'shaping of the Modern Mind.

"☆☆☆ Once upon a time, pair of fair-haired twins named Renaissance and Reformation, persecuted and abused turned against their wicked but doddering step-mother, the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages ☆☆☆".

Both the Humanists and the protestants worked together for the emancipation of the mankind. They were conscious rebels and were rebelling against the same thing – against the familiar, but to sensitive minds, painful gap between the 'ideal' and the real; and against a general degradation and de-humanization of the mankind which was a prominent feature of the Middle Ages. This uncomfortable gap between the ideal and 'real which existed there throughout the Middle Ages, was by the fifteenth century almost too wide for the most ingenious explanations to close. The ideal was still Christian, still an ideal of unity, peace, security, status, organization, the reality was wars, divided authority - even in the papacy which should reflect God's own serene unity - , a great scramble for wealth, and a general humilation of mankind. In the Middle Ages was valued according to his union with Church and corporation. The natural man, with his purely individual, emotional life was of an
account and was not regarded as authorised. (Burkhardt has well shown in his work on the culture of
the Renaissance how the propensity to individualism and the need of a purely personal development
could not fail to arise under the influence of the historical conditions in Italy in the fourteenth and
fifteenth century).

The Renaissance was a protest and revolt against absolute science and it liberated the
inquiring human mind from subjection to the written word or official authority of church and state. And
the Humanism which grew out of the Renaissance and which, indeed, was the inner meaning of the
Renaissance, was return to man and nature from the trammels of an artificial system of life and
thought, based upon supernatural conception of the world.

"☆☆☆ The common characteristics of the Humanists is the escape, more or less
through, from the fetters in which human thought had been confined — an escape into a
wider freer world where all facts were relevant, where all theories had to be tested by
relating them to their discoveries, and all formulae recast in accordance with their new-old light — an escape whose prime cause was the new enthusiasm for the poets,
historians and philosophers of Greece and Rome, and the scriptures of the Old
Testament and New Testament, regarded no longer through the distorting medium of
allegorical interpretation, but reverently, patiently, and critically studied ☆☆☆".13

It was along these lines that humanism set out to emancipate the human being and to quote Protagoras 'to make him the measure of all things.' It was revolt against a 'way of life', a system - a system it found corrupt, over labored, state, unlovely and untrue. The humanists were rebelling against the social and moral code of their time in which there was absolutely no place for reason, logic and intellect and when tradition and dogma ruled supreme. The church and the state had all the authority and both these institutions had become corrupt and exercised undue authority on men and women. The ideal of 'Truth' and 'Beauty' and 'Modesty' was there alright but it was confined only to the Holy Books and ethical treatises. Nobody bothered to teach the common man how he can live his life successfully on this Earth with help of his own intellect and reasoning. All the efforts were focussed on religion and the 'life there-after', totally ignoring the fact that this earthly life is also important and that a man can live happily if he is guided by Reason. Man, the most fascinating and the 'Best Creation' of God had forgotten his proper place in this cosmos and he must try to justify his existance and to achieve and conquer everything which this universe offers. The Fathers of the church reduced Man to more Nothing which was sent to the Earth in disgrace and so here he must compensate for his sins and the soul aim of his life was to live and not according to religion and age old traditions. Happiness and success were regarded cheap and almost irreligious: Reason, that magic - word, was considered blasphemous by those self-appointed demagogues: It was against this abnormal way of life that the Humanists revolted.
"It was a revolt, more or less complete with a new sense of freedom and individuality, a deliverance from bondage into a world of no restraints. Every shade of free activity, from on end of the spectrum to the other, from the unblushing libertinism of the newly emancipated to the reforming zeal of those who had found the highest and final standard, is to be found within the rank of the humanists.

The humanists believed that we are to seek for the key of the universe, or at any rate, for the key to man's life within himself. "To be Men, to play the game of life beautifully seemed to be their highest ambition. And the reason that they were so much attracted by Greece and all that is Greek was that the ancient Greeks 'played the game of life' to quote Goethe - 'more beautifully than any others and their interest seemed always lie in life."

"The Humanists were not called upon by the conditions of their lives, like most modern people, to put forth great efforts for the subjugation of natural forces; they did not get captured by an important mission, like that of the Romans, nor was it their tendency, like most oriental people to seek peace in the contemplation of the absolute and infinite. They wanted to live beautifully and die beautifully and to behave neither like 'subhuman' nor like superman but like 'human'. Their religion, their art, their literature were all eminently humane". 14

This was the reason that the Humanists idealized the Greeks. The Greeks were indeed born Humanists and Humanism - in the broader sense in which we are using it here - is certainly not to be found in the teachings of Comte or the pragmatists, but rather in the lives and culture of the ancient Greeks. Thus, our modern Humanists chose the Greeks as an ideal for them and for the common people - an ideal not lofty or sublime, but 'humane'.

"☆☆☆ They found that the Greeks - and Romans - were gentlemanly, disciplined, moderate in all things, distrustful of the wild, the excited, the unbuttoned, the enthusiastic, free from superstition and rigidity - but no means irreligious - , controlled, mature men of imagination not narrow rationalists ☆☆☆".15

Inspired by these balanced and 'humane' lives of the Greeks, the humanists tried, through their philosophy which was a more systematic and elaborate form of the above mentioned Greek ideology, to infuse the same spirit in the men and women of their time and to make them behave like healthy human beings, not like religion - obsessed robots! They wanted Reason to be the driving force of the human machinery and they believed that because of his inherent goodness and reasoning capacity man can be the measure of all things. In other words, Humanism was a return to man and nature from the trammels of an artificial system of life and thought, based upon a supernatural conception of the world. It liberated the man from the unhealthy and crippling influence of the church and the state, boldly declaring that for a normal and balanced life there must be a harmonious

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15. Shaping of the Modern Mind.
development of human body and soul. Humanism denotes, then, not only a literary tendency, a school of philologists (they were all men of letters who set out a pattern and standard for modern schoolship, studied ancient languages and introduced analytical and historical standards of criticism), but also a tendency of life, characterised by interest for the human, both as a subject of observation and as the foundation of action.

So far we have seen Humanism in a general and broader perspective (because it is in this general and broader sense that the term has been used in the present thesis), now let us cast a hurried glance on the purely philosophical and technical aspect of Humanism and see what philosophical and technical changes it had gone through from the 14th century to our times.

Humanism may chiefly be classified into two distinct systems:

1. The Theocentric, (which existed even before the Renaissance).

2. The Anthropocentric, (which came into existence during the Renaissance and with which we are chiefly concerned here).

The first fifteen century of our era were dominated by the Theocentric system while the last four centuries by the Anthropocentric.

The theocentric type of humanism was preached in the Medieval Period in Europe and abroad by all the great thinkers of these times such as Ancelm (103-1109 A.D.)16, Abelard (1079-1142 A.D.)17.

16. History of philosophy, by Alfred weber, Translated by Frank Thilly (U.S.A.) P.164.
Aquinas (d. 1274- A.D.)18, Duns Scotus (d. 1308 A.D.)19, etc. Man, with his complex interests and cultural aspirations received a large acknowledgement in the speculative scheme. The scheme was not anthropocentric: everything in was focused upon God the author and finisher of all creation. That is what distinguishes it from the Renaissance during Humanism and the Humanism prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

The revolution that took place with the Renaissance and the change that transformed the basic concept of Humanism is ill-described as the change from trust in authority to trust in reason. Rather, it was a revolution in the objects of man's rational interest - from thought concentrated on his other worldly destiny to thought concentrated on his present habitation, the world of time and space. Everything was changed now: the revival of the great Platonic tradition, in combination with a new interest in facts, i.e. in observation and experiment called into being the new knowledge the knowledge of the positive sciences of man and nature. The old world outlook, in which man and nature found their status within an order that was supernatural and divine, yielded place to a new one in which man and nature filled the picture, with God fading a little in the background, and nature ever more and more being subjected to the sovereignty of man.20

When we turn to philosophy for a dispassionate exhibition of this new world - out look 21, we find

21. Descartes established his famous formula, Cogito-Ergo-Sum, i.e. I think, therefore I exist.
it explicitly formulated by Descartes (1596-1650 A.D.)22. "The wheel of thought thus revolved in full circle 23,- from the Middle Age orthodoxy to the recognition of modern thought, from God as reason to Reason as God, from faith in the God man to faith in Man: and thus the ideal of perfected humanity had its birth. This was the ideal that inspired the Prophets of Humanism, both in the age of the Revolution and after - the ideal of Condorcet, the Saint Simonians, Comte and others.

But before the nineteenth century has passed, a new outlook was dawning upon men's minds. New ideas were winning ascendancy, some of them theocentric others indifferent and some even hostile to religion. And thus we come to the twentieth century movements in humanism, like Pragmatism, Marxism, Personalism and Existentialism.

This was a brief sketch how humanism purely Technical and philosophical Humanism - has developed and what different ideologies it has represented at various stages. But this was a purely technical Humanism, and as we have said earlier, we are using the term in a much broader and more 'human' sense. We are dealing with as a 'philosophy of life', which can neither be time bound nor can be confined to a particular period. It came into existense when Adam put his foot on this Earth and will continue to exist till the last man bids fare well.

It was there when no particular "ism" was allotted to it and will remain there even if the term is wiped out from the pages of philosophic treatises. To repeat what we have said in the very begining of

22. History of philosophy, P.243
It was there when no particular "ism" was allotted to it and will remain there even if the term is wiped out from the pages of philosophic treatises. To repeat what we have said in the very beginning of this chapter: Humanism is deeper than a philosophy and more congenial than a code. It is not life's dictum, but life itself. It is not life's dictum but its expose.

To quote Crame Brinton:

"Let us then take Humanism as a kind of cover all under which may be grouped all men whose world view is neither primarily theological nor primarily rationalistic ☆☆☆. A Humanist can be a theologian trying to do without a personal God, an educational reformer who we have too much of natural sciences and not enough of the humanists, a philosopher who holds that humans ate rather more than animals if less than God, so if we limit ourselves to the Renaissance admires who are usually classed as Humanists.

We shall miss much."

But at the same time we must also bear in mind that there are some very basic concepts of, Humanism, which are the distinguishing characteristics of a humanist- whether he is a theologian, and educationist, a historian, a philosopher, a literature, or like our Shaikh, a poet. These distinguishing features of Humanism are being given below and it will be along these guide lines that we will judge Sa'di as a humanist. Here we are just enumerating them, a fuller discussion will follow in the next chapter when we will apply them to Sa'di's works:
1. Man is a Measure in Himself and for Himself, or Man is a Measure for All the things.

2. Harmonious Development of Body and Soul.

3. A Rational Interpretation of Religion and Morality.

4. Exaltation of Freedom.

5. Love of Beauty and optimism.

6. Compassion.

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