

# **The Humanist Manifestos**

**How Would You Write One?**

# **Definition**

**(Webster's Third New International  
Dictionary)**

## **Manifesto:**

**a public declaration of intentions,  
motives, or views**

# The Humanist Manifestos

- **1933: A Humanist Manifesto**
- 1952: The Amsterdam Declaration
- **1973: Humanist Manifesto II**
- 1980: A Secular Humanist Declaration
- 2002: The Amsterdam Declaration 2002
- **2003: Humanism and Its Aspirations**

# The Organizations

- **IHEU: International Humanist and Ethical Union**
  - International umbrella group
  - Founded in Amsterdam in 1952
  - 2 Amsterdam Declarations

# The Organizations

- **AHA: American Humanist Association**
  - Member of IHEU
  - Founded in 1941 as an outgrowth of the Humanist Fellowship (founded 1927)
  - Educational tax exemption now; its beginnings were in the Unitarian church
  - Promotes Humanism politically, legally, and socially
  - 3 Humanist Manifestos

# The Organizations

- **Council for Secular Humanism**
  - Member of IHEU
  - Founded by Paul Kurtz in 1980 as the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism
  - Educational tax exemption; opposed to categorizing Humanism as a religion
  - Umbrella organization; lots of interest in debunking supernatural/paranormal claims
  - A Secular Humanist Declaration

# **Basic Concepts in Manifestos**

- 1. Traditional religions are inadequate or worse.**
- 2. Humans are responsible for values, determined through science, intellect, and experience in relation to human needs.**
- 3. The meaning of life is to help all humans to realize their full potential.**
- 4. Not all Humanists believe exactly the same things.**

# **Additional Concepts**

- 5. Humans evolved.**
- 6. Freedom of thought and personal liberty are crucial.**



# 1933: A Humanist Manifesto

- **Authors**

- Roy Wood Sellars and Raymond Bragg
- 34 signatures

- **Contents**

- 2 pages
- A new religious movement; science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs
- Idealistic: build it and they will come
- Rejects acquisitiveness; espouses “a shared life in a shared world”

# 1952: The Amsterdam Declaration

- **Authors**

- IHEU

- Passed by IHEU general assembly at first World Humanist Congress

- **Contents**

- 1 page

- *Ethical* humanism; not a new sect but the outcome of a long tradition of thought

- Anti-totalitarian: personal liberty with social responsibility

- Science in the service of ethical goals

# 1973: Humanist Manifesto II

- **Authors**

- AHA (Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson)
- 282, then thousands of signatures

- **Contents**

- 5 pages
- *Ethical* process
- More hardheaded and realistic approach
- **Advocates for specific political and social policies**
  - Strong human rights, separation of church and state
  - An end to war, poverty, racism, WMD
  - Legal right to birth control, divorce, abortion, suicide
  - Wealth-sharing among nations, easier international travel and communication, world law and courts

# 1980: A Secular Humanist Declaration

- **Author**

- The Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (*Council for Secular Humanism*)
- Paul Kurtz

- **Contents**

- About 10 pages
- *Secular* humanism ... committed to democracy.”
- Emphasis on political and religious liberty
- Long section rejecting traditional religion
- Concerned about rise of religious fundamentalism

# 2002: The Amsterdam Declaration 2002

- **Author**
  - IHEU
  - Adopted by the IHEU General Assembly, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary World Humanist Congress
- **Contents**
  - 1 page
  - *Ethical*, the outcome of a long tradition of thought
  - “the official defining statement of World Humanism”
  - Added that Humanism values artistic creativity and imagination

# 2003: Humanism and Its Aspirations

- **Authors**
  - AHA
  - Many input; final committee chaired by Fred Edwords
  - 71 signatures, including 21 Nobel laureates
- **Contents**
  - 1 page
  - Progressive philosophy of life
  - Optimistic; mentions joy and beauty
  - Emphasizes interpersonal goals
  - Lists worldwide goals of human rights, resource equality, and environment protection

# Sample Manifesto Issues

(Manifesto: a public declaration of intentions, motives, or views)

- **Is Humanism a religion or a philosophy?**
- **Is Humanism more about beliefs or about behaviors?**
- **What are the core beliefs and values of a Humanist?**
- **What, if anything, should a Humanist Manifesto say about theism?**
- **Are there any behaviors by which you could recognize a Humanist?**
- **Are there recent events that would or should color your Manifesto?**