

Epicurean Philosophy Vs. Humanism

Post by “Don” of April 26, 2023 at 5:51 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

make sure no one gets a "this thread is too old to post in now" message

Fully realizing this thread is almost 2 years old, I've decided to post here since it appears to be the most relevant (and to have context that seems applicable to my current question). I thought I'd use the quote from Cassius's post to illustrate why I'm "bumping" this thread instead of starting a new one.

[Quote from Joshua](#)

I understand humanism (lowercase) in the strictest sense to be not a philosophy, but an orientation of interest or inquiry. Art can be humanist; it needn't have anything to do with philosophy at all

Agreed and important.

Context: I've been watching some atheist and secular humanist videos on YouTube recently, and it struck me to ask myself: "Am I just a secular humanist and not really an 'Epicurean'? What these people are saying makes sense."

I seem to have come around to the idea that I'm definitely secular (or even secularist) and could be small-h humanist without being capital-H Humanist. To define terms:

secularist: [Cambridge](#) gives this definition: 'someone who believes that religion should not be involved with the ordinary social and political activities of a country'. So, yeah, under those definitions, I would consider myself a secularist.

humanist: [Cambridge](#) is a bit less helpful when it comes to "humanist" - "a person who believes in humanism (= the idea that people do not need a god or religion to satisfy their spiritual and emotional needs)" That seems a fairly loose definition of "humanism" but, if that was the definition, I would consider myself a "humanist" under that definition.

So, up to here, yeah, I think I could consider myself a secular humanist... but am I a Secular Humanist.

As shown above there are several [Humanist Manifestos](#) including the [Amsterdam Declaration](#) to clearly delineate what capital-H Humanists declare as their worldview. There's also the Humanist Manifesto III. This is where the rubber hits the proverbial road. If you look at the

Amsterdam Declaration (link above), some of their "declarations" align with Epicureanism (and I provocatively use the -ism form there on purpose) and others do not. Here is the Amsterdam Declaration excerpt of their 7 tenets for easier reference. I've taken the liberty to highlight some issues that do not seem to me to align with Epicureanism and added some Notes:

Quote

The fundamentals of modern Humanism are as follows:

1. Humanism is ethical. It affirms the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others. Humanists have a duty of care to all of humanity including future generations. Humanists believe that morality is an intrinsic part of human nature based on understanding and a concern for others, needing no external sanction.
2. Humanism is rational. It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively. Humanists believe that the solutions to the world's problems lie in human thought and action rather than divine intervention. Humanism advocates the application of the methods of science and free inquiry to the problems of human welfare. But Humanists also believe that the application of science and technology must be tempered by human values. Science gives us the means but human values must propose the ends.
3. Humanism supports democracy and human rights. Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of every human being. It holds that democracy and human development are matters of right. The principles of democracy and human rights can be applied to many human relationships and are not restricted to methods of government.
4. Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility. Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of the free person responsible to society, and recognises our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. Humanism is undogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. *[NOTE: Really? This Declaration seems just a little dogmatic from my perspective.]* It is thus committed to education free from indoctrination. *[NOTE: Set sail in your own little boat free from indoctrination!]*
5. Humanism is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion. The world's major religions claim to be based on revelations fixed for all time, and many seek to impose their world-views on all of humanity. Humanism recognises that reliable knowledge of the world and ourselves arises through a continuing process of observation, evaluation and revision.
6. Humanism values artistic creativity and imagination and recognises the transforming power of art. Humanism affirms the importance of literature, music, and the visual and

performing arts for personal development and fulfilment.

7. Humanism is a lifestance aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere.

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As Cassius pointed out in the thread above, Humanists "declare" certain principles to be universal or to put forward ideals... possible admirable ideals... but what are those ideals based on other than dogmatic assertions.

So, I appreciate your indulgence in my stream of consciousness here. I had to talk this out... So, it appears I can comfortably think of myself as a secular humanist and a "practicing" Epicurean and not be in conflict in my own mind. However, I don't think I am (currently) a Humanist with a capital H.

Thoughts welcomed!