



The Enlightenment



**The Newsletter of the
Humanist Association of London and Area**
An Affiliate of Humanist Canada (HC)

Volume 6

Number 3

March 2010

Buddhism – A Religion Without God

The Religion of Buddhism is of particular interest to humanists because Buddhists do not worship a single omnipresent, all-knowing, all-powerful, supposedly benevolent god as do so many religions. Therefore, if all knowledge is not concentrated in a supreme being, there is a great deal of room left for metaphysical speculation.

Buddhism originates from the beliefs of Siddhartha Gotama who, in the sixth century BCE, founded an order of monks that preached and practiced his views. He became known as the Buddha (the enlightened one). His beliefs, that led him to enlightenment, were born out of his despondency with what he regarded as the stale conformity of Hinduism in India. Siddhartha believed progress toward reducing human suffering had been lost in the ritual of mass religion. He proclaimed: "One thing I teach, suffering and the end of suffering. It is only ill and the ceasing of ill that I proclaim."

In Buddhism there is no eternal higher authority for humans to look to; just themselves. Enlightenment comes from self-reflection and the authority of lived experience. Perhaps the most enduring lesson of lived experiences is that one reaches the highest ends through self-subsistence rather than through unrelenting discipline. As the Buddha states: "Those who rely upon themselves only, not looking for assistance to anyone beside themselves, it is they who will reach the top-most height."

The state of mind that Buddhists strive for is called nirvana. This differs from enlightenment as it involves more than just the attainment of knowledge. Nirvana is not a specific set of beliefs about the world because specific world-views decay and become dogmatic. It is a transcendent state where the reality of things is understood and suffering is extinguished. One comes closest to this state when meditating. Despite the indeterminacy of nirvana, the Buddha outlined a guide to the good life called the Eightfold Noble Path. 1. Right ideas. 2. Right resolution. 3. Right speech. 4. Right behavior. 5. Right vocation. 6. Right effort. 7. Right mindfulness. 8. Right dhyana. (higher contemplation).

Today Buddhism attracts many followers, who like the Buddha himself, have become disenchanted with mainstream religion. As action centred, it offers a distinctive alternative. Its attraction also lies in the fact that its underlying message is simple: self-control and humility, a message that outweighs commitments to ritual or religious law.

President's Remarks

It is my great pleasure to take on the duties of President of the Humanist Association of London and Area for the coming year. I want to thank Don Hatch for the terrific job he has done as President over the past four years, and for continuing on the Executive Board as Secretary. My job is also made easier by the very able and enthusiastic efforts of all the members of the Board and a number of hard-working volunteers. I'm glad to be taking on this job at a time when HALA looks to be in excellent health. Our attendance at monthly meetings is strong, and we continue to attract new visitors each month. We are getting to the point where we may need to think about finding a larger space for our meetings. Our financial situation is also healthy. Quite a number of individuals have renewed their membership for 2010, and I would strongly encourage you to submit your renewal if you haven't done it yet. A particularly exciting recent development is the fact that we've been granted charitable status by Revenue Canada on the basis of education. Thanks are due to Goldie Emerson for his work in spearheading this effort and putting together the very lengthy application, and to Don Hatch for communicating with the officials in Ottawa. This means that we can now give tax-deductible receipts for donations received, which may lead to increased income, and in turn make it possible to carry out more activities. It also means that we now have the challenge of living up to our stated purpose of "providing seminars, conferences, and newsletters." We are already beginning to discuss plans for another speaker series later in the year. In the meantime, we have a very interesting and varied line-up of speakers for our regular meetings in the coming months, and I look forward to seeing all of you there. Finally, I would like to thank Don for once again putting together an excellent issue of the *Enlightenment*. ~ Rod Martin.

The Board of the Humanist Association of London and Area (HALA)

President– Dr. Rod Martin - (519) 673-6635 – e-mail – ramartin@uwo.ca

Secretary– Don Hatch – (519) 472-6167 – e-mail – dahatch@rogers.com

Treasurer – Claire Van Daele-Boseret – (519) 451-5962 - e-mail, c.v.d.b@rogers.com

Member at Large – Ed Ashman – (519) 457- 9982 – e-mail, edward017@sympatico.ca - Promotions

Member at Large –Dave Mabee – (519) 697-6010 – e-mail – davemabee@rogers.com - Membership

Member at Large – Charlotte Kurn – (519) 434-0605 – e-mail – ckurn@execulink.com

Member at Large – Walter Heywood – (519) – e-mail – wjheywood@yahoo.com

The Humanist Association of London and Area meets at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, 505 Dundas Street in London, on the second Wednesday of the months September to July inclusive at 7:30 p.m. Please use the rear door off the parking lot. *The Enlightenment*, edited by Don Hatch, is published six times a year in January, March, May, July, September and November. Note: We reserve the right to edit and publish articles at our discretion.

Visit our web site at www.humanists-london.org

New members are welcome. Contact Membership Secretary Dave Mabee at (519) 697-6010, e-mail davemabee@rogers.com Membership fees are listed below.

	<u>HC</u>	<u>Humanist</u>	<u>HALA</u>	<u>HALA Limited</u>
	<u>Basic</u>	<u>Perspectives</u>	<u>Basic</u>	<u>Resources</u>
Single	\$40	\$22	\$20	\$10
Family	\$50		\$25	\$15
Life	\$700			

Aweism

If you are not presently an adherent of one of the world's traditional religions, how would you describe yourself in terms of your beliefs? Do you say atheist, agnostic, non-believer, humanist, secular humanist, or something else? When Professor Phil Zuckerman of Pitzer College in California contemplated this question, he felt that none of the terms or labels listed above accurately reflected his personal orientation.

Zuckerman readily admits that since he does not believe there is a God "out there," he does fall into the atheist camp. But because he has a real love of life – not to mention a deep sense of the profound mystery that is existence, the beauty that is creativity, and the power of justice – he finds that the self-designation of atheist simply falls short, falls flat. He wants to offer a positive, affirming designation, not one that merely negates what others believe. And he finds that the label agnostic falls short as well. Agnosticism is really just an absence of a firm position because it simply implies that it is impossible to know whether or not God exists. Many who call themselves agnostic are really atheists, but hesitate to use the term because the word atheist has a derogatory connotation in the eyes of many of the general public.

So what about secular humanism as a label? A secular humanist begins with the rejection of supernatural beliefs or theistic assertions, but goes on to positively advocate an optimistic belief in the potential of humans to solve problems and make the world a better, safer and more just place. A secular humanist believes in reason, science, and rational inquiry and is committed to democracy, tolerance, open debate, and human rights. He or she believes in the cultivation of moral excellence and in the moral education of children. But in describing what he *is*, Zuckerman wants something else, something more personal than the values he supports and advocates. He wants to describe what he feels and experiences -- like the tearful joy and wonder he encountered when he first heard his daughter's heart beat, like he feels when listening to great jazz or Mozart, or when overlooking a pristine mountain lake during a thunderstorm, and when thinking of important, memorable, and meaningful moments in his life. At these times he feels secular humanism leaves a bit to be desired. Instead, for him, the words that come closest to describing these profound feelings are awe, hence a new word, aweism.

Aweism is the belief that existence is ultimately a beautiful mystery, that being alive is a wellspring of wonder, and that the deepest questions of life, death, time and space are so powerful as to inspire deep feelings of joy, poignancy, and sublime awe. To be an aweist is to be an atheist, or an agnostic or a secular humanist – and then some. An aweist is someone who admits that existing is wonderfully mysterious and that life is a profound experience. Aweism can also be described as embracing and experiencing joyful exuberance, sans theistic assumptions. But can it be considered a form of spirituality? Zuckerman says no, because he is unable to separate spirituality from religion or the supernatural. Aweism has a decidedly secular orientation. His various experiences of awe that momentarily flow through his being don't convince him that there is some supernatural force permeating the universe. An aweist just feels awe from time to time, appreciates it, owns it, relishes it and carries on – without any supernatural, cosmic, karmic or other worldly baggage.

Zuckerman feels comfortable being described as an aweist because it adds "colour" to secular orientations that are sometimes described as lacking any sense of awe and wonder. Will the label catch on? Too soon to tell. Aweism will require a considerable amount of explaining before this new word becomes part of our general vocabulary. (DAH with thanks to Dr. Zuckerman).

The Slow Road to Secularization

The predictions of the radical secularizers may have proven overly exuberant when measured against the tenacity of belief and the complexity of the present world. And the polemics of best-selling atheist authors like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens may seem to vindicate Freud's imaginary opponent's warning that religion could only be replaced by another doctrine, one equally marked by sanctity, rigidity, and intolerance. Yet if the human past was fully intertwined with religion, the future is long and open. As far as the eye can see, it is a future indelibly stamped by the great turning point when non-belief entered the world. In considering these prospects, let us transpose onto the grandest metaphysical scale Chairman Mao's response when he was asked about the impact of the French Revolution: "Too soon to tell."

Secularism is undoubtedly suffering through a crisis of confidence. Perhaps, though, this presents an opportunity to reinvigorate the secularist vision. Outspoken atheists such as Hitchens and Dawkins may allow non-believers to do some cheerleading, but they are not likely to reenergize the radically secular worldview. After all, their arguments are familiar; they have been enumerated many times already. They are, as Freud's fictive opponent feared, likely to breed intolerance. Better to recognize that both the history of religion and the secular story are not lacking in examples of intolerance, but neither is one or the other short on acts of charity and hospitality, right up to and including love across the borders. Besides, it is not clear that anyone stops believing because of the better argument.

The secularizers should worry less about converting believers and more about reinvigorating secularism's own potential for deep meaning and rich experience. From at least Chateaubriand's time, savvy defenders of the faith have known that they will not win an argument on the basis of reason alone. So they have largely ceded that ground to secularists. But in common with the Romantic Chateaubriand, defenders of faith have insisted that religion holds a lock on the power to satisfy people's need for emotional fulfillment. Secularists have been all too willing to allow believers to monopolize the language of sublimity, ecstasy, deep meaning, mystery, and transcendence. It is time to insist on the authenticity and meaningfulness of the secularist's transports, reveries, epiphanies, and, if you will, transcendent experiences. Secularists have allowed themselves to be portrayed as heroic pessimists, cold rationalists, immoralists, or callow hedonists. Time now to reaffirm the drama and pathos of the secularist adventure. If Chateaubriand wanted us to weep at Catholic Mass, then it is time for secularists to get dewy-eyed when, for instance, they read the resounding final words of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

We should put aside the language of a clash. The reinvigoration of secularist values need not involve an attack on religion, any more than the reassertion of religion need involve an attack on non-belief. Indeed, in a pluralist situation, secularists can worry about the order of their own house, without concerning themselves overly much with their neighbors. But this is the important point: religion and non-religion can coexist in this way when and only when they both already stand firmly within a relationship defined by secularization. The moment that secularized relationship ceases to be the case, we would all have cause to worry, believers and non-believers alike. (This article from Lapham's Quarterly was sent to us by Bob Allen).

Humanism: A Long Past and a Short History

By Rod A. Martin

This is the second in a planned series of talks based on the book "Humanism: Beliefs and Practices" by Jeanane Fowler. It was presented at the meeting of the Humanist Association of London and Area on January 13, 2010.

Humanism can be said to have a long past, but a short history. The short history refers to the fact that Humanism, as an organized movement, is less than 100 years old. The long past relates to the fact that many of the ideas of Humanism can be traced to a line of thinkers extending back over hundreds and even thousands of years.

The word *humanism* did not exist until the early 1800s, when it was coined by a German philosopher to refer to a particular approach to education based on the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Thus, it did not originally have the meaning that we're familiar with today. The word *humanist* has been around somewhat longer; it originated in Renaissance Italy in the late 1400s. Again, it had an educational meaning, referring to certain university professors who taught the subjects that we now call the "humanities." These included the study of classical languages, literature, philosophy, and history. Even today, professors of the humanities are sometimes called "humanists." It wasn't until the late 1800s that the terms *humanism* and *humanist* began to be used to refer to the non-theistic life stance that we now associate with them.

The Long Past of Humanism

The early roots of Humanism can be traced to three important periods of European history: ancient Greece, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment.

I. Ancient Greece (500 – 250 BCE)

Like most ancient cultures, the Greeks originally espoused a polytheistic religious belief system. Many of the early philosophers began to question faith in gods and superstitious religious traditions, and argued that it is better to rely on human reason and intellect to gain knowledge of the natural world and to live a good life. Many of these thinkers were persecuted and even put to death for their atheism, which was seen as a threat to the social order. Several of these philosophers are particularly noteworthy in the early development of what we would now call humanist thinking.

Anaxagoras (500 - 428 BCE), who is sometimes called the "father of free thought," was an early Greek philosopher who questioned the superstitious beliefs of his age. He attempted to give scientific explanations for such phenomena as eclipses, meteors, rainbows, and the sun. He was an early proponent of *atomism*, the belief that all things are made of tiny imperishable elements.

Protagoras (490 - 420 BCE) was also skeptical about the nature of the gods. His agnostic views are embodied in his statement: "Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be, because of the obscurity of the subject, and the brevity of human life." Protagoras is famous for stating that "man is the measure of all things," which seems to capture an essentially humanistic perspective. He also grappled with questions about how we can have a naturalistic system of morality and ethics without believing in divine absolutes.

Democritus (460 - 370 BCE), who has been called the "father of science," was a materialist, who had a mechanistic view of the world and believed that everything is governed by natural laws. He questioned belief in the gods and was skeptical about personal immortality. He

was also an atomist, believing that everything is composed of atoms, which he conceived of as tiny particles that are physically indivisible and indestructible. He taught that atoms are always in motion, there is empty space between them, and there are infinite numbers and kinds of atoms, which differ in shape, size, and temperature. These views are quite amazing when we consider that it was not until the late 1800s that the theory of atoms was finally confirmed by science.

Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE), the founder of Epicureanism, is a particularly important figure in the history of humanist thought. He took a materialistic perspective on the world, and attacked superstition and belief in divine intervention. He also believed in atomism, which seems to be a hallmark of these forerunners of humanism. Although he believed that the gods exist, he conceived of them as physical beings made of atoms, who are very far away and are unconcerned about humans and uninvolved in human affairs. These ideas seem to make him an early proponent of Deism. Epicurus believed that the greatest good is to seek modest pleasures and attain a state of tranquility and freedom from fear, through knowledge, friendship, and living a virtuous, temperate life. This philosophy is quite different from the common stereotype of Epicureans as advocates of self-indulgence and gluttony (a pejorative view of them that was disseminated much later by the Roman Catholic Church). Instead, Epicurus advocated enjoyment of the simple pleasures of life, restraint, and self-discipline (he himself was celibate, although he didn't require this of his followers). He said that “who you eat *with* is more important than *what* you eat.” His ideas were put into practice by members of numerous local Epicurean societies, which flourished throughout Greece and the Roman world for several hundred years. They preached egalitarianism, and treated free men, women, and slaves as equals. It is interesting to think of these groups as the original Humanist movement. Unfortunately, they were eventually suppressed and virtually wiped out by the Church after the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 313 CE. Christians condemned the Epicureans because of their materialistic views and their emphasis on personal happiness rather than service to God.

II. The Renaissance (1300s – 1400s CE)

The Renaissance began in the mid-fourteenth century in Florence, Italy, and spread throughout Europe over the following century. Until then, Europe had gone through the 1000-year period often called the “dark ages” in which the Catholic Church controlled all aspects of society. The Renaissance (which means “rebirth”) was a period of rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman writings and revival of classical thinking and ideals. Unlike earlier medieval scholars who subjugated all areas of thought to religion, the leaders of the Renaissance began to compartmentalize “secular” thinking from “religious” thinking. Although they didn't reject religion altogether, they relegated it to only one area of life. As Fowler points out, “the very fact that classical Greece and Rome pre-dated the Christian era made it possible to place more emphasis on human potential rather than divine providence, and on secular progression rather than theological determinism” (p. 15).

Instead of promoting humility and the innate sinfulness of humans, these thinkers focused on humans' ability to aspire to dignified heights and shape their own destiny. Artists such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci began to focus their art on the human form and secular human concerns rather than purely religious themes. Through the study of human anatomy, their sculpture and painting took on greater realism, capturing human emotion and feeling (as exemplified in the Mona Lisa). Philosophers emphasized the power and potential of the human mind in reason, debate, and analysis. In the universities, there was the rise of the *studia humanitatis*, a curriculum of study that focused on grammar, rhetoric, moral philosophy, poetry, and history, as studied via the classical authors. This was in contrast to the traditional

university curriculum of Scholasticism, which was based on the medieval theology of Thomas Aquinas.

In sum, this period witnessed the revival of humanistic ideas from the ancient Greeks, along with a renewed sense of self-confidence, exploration, and discovery, leading to growth in commerce, trade, and exploration. The focus was shifting away from divinity to humanity, from religious concerns to secular interests, and humans were being seen as masters of their own fate. However, there were limits to the humanism of this period. The Renaissance thinkers were still essentially religious believers, even though they de-emphasized religion in their world view. They also tended to be very elitist: they were aristocrats and intellectuals who were not very concerned with the lives of ordinary people. They looked down on the common vernacular languages, preferring to write in classical Greek, and they idealized ancient Greek thought and customs. They even snobbishly preferred hand-written manuscripts rather than the less expensive books that were being mass produced on the newly-invented printing presses. Thus, their focus was largely on the *past* rather than the present or future.

III. The Enlightenment (1650s – late 1700s)

The period known as the Enlightenment began in Paris with the thinking of a group of philosophers called the “philosophes,” including Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau. As a leader of this movement, Voltaire fought for civil liberties, the right to a fair trial, and freedom of religion, denouncing the hypocrisies and injustices of the French aristocracy and the Roman Catholic Church. He was a proponent of Deism, which is a belief in a sort of “watchmaker God” who created the universe and the laws of nature and set everything in motion, but is no longer involved in the day-to-day running of the world and is largely irrelevant to human affairs. Enlightenment ideas spread from France to other countries of Europe and to America, where they were taken up by thinkers such as David Hume, John Locke, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. The constitution of the United States of America was essentially an Enlightenment document.

This period saw the re-emergence of human-centered ideas and renewed optimism about human potential. Unlike the Renaissance, it was based on *science*, rather than ancient Greek and Roman writings. New scientific discoveries were being made, building on the earlier work of people like Galileo and Isaac Newton. This period also represented a more definite break with religion. Writers like Voltaire voiced a more clear-cut opposition to religious superstition, dogma, and rituals. Instead of religion as the basis for knowledge, humans themselves had to find answers by studying nature scientifically. The human mind was seen as capable of finding answers to problems. Some thinkers, such as Voltaire, embraced Deism, whereas others rejected belief in God altogether. The Enlightenment was also less elitist than the Renaissance, as many of its leading thinkers were concerned about social issues such as slavery, criminal justice, democracy, and tolerance.

The Short History of Humanism

The organized movement that we know today as Humanism emerged in the early twentieth century out of several groups and movements originating in the nineteenth century. Prominent among these are the Freethinkers, the Ethical Societies, and the Unitarians.

I. Freethinkers

The “free thought” movement, which started in Britain, championed the right of all people to

think for themselves, free from the constraints of religion. Its roots went back to the 1700s in the Enlightenment ideas of writers like John Locke. By the late nineteenth century, it had become an organized movement made up of many working class as well as middle class members. Its members argued that one's beliefs should be formed on the basis of science, logic, and reason, rather than religion, authority, tradition, or any other type of dogma. They followed *Clifford's Credo*, named after the British mathematician and philosopher William Clifford, which stated: "*It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.*" They emphasized social morality and responsibility, informed by individual choice and rational thought. They also believed in racial and sexual equality, advocated the abolition of slavery and women's right to vote, and emphasized the importance of education as a means of achieving these goals. The International Federation of Freethinkers was formed in the late 1800s, and the *Freethinker* magazine, which is still published today, was first issued in Britain in 1881. In the late 1800s there were many Freethought congregations throughout the U.S. and Canada. For example, the Toronto Freethought Association (later renamed the Toronto Secular Society), was founded in 1873. For about 25 years, this organization also published a Canadian free thought magazine entitled *Secular Thought*.

II. Ethical Societies

The Ethical Societies were another group that emerged in the late 1800s, originally in the United States. Similar to the Freethinkers, they were opposed to dogmatic religious beliefs, but they were also particularly concerned about issues of morality (hence the name "Ethical"). They challenged the claim that only religious people can be moral, and sought to live ethical lives based on reason and science rather than belief in the supernatural and life after death.

Felix Adler, who was the son of a Jewish Rabbi, founded the Ethical Culture Movement in New York City in 1876. Later, its name was changed to the American Ethical Union. Members of this organization emphasized the importance of living in accordance with ethical principles, in order to live meaningful and fulfilling lives, and to create a world that is good for all. They sought to support and encourage one another in becoming better people and doing good in the world. They were actively involved in many social causes, including promotion of universal education, adequate housing for the poor, health care, and early childhood education.

Numerous ethical societies were formed throughout the United States, Canada, and Britain. In many ways, this was a sort of non-theistic religion. The congregations functioned much like local churches, with Sunday morning meetings, social outreach activities, and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. Apparently, there are still some Ethical Society congregations today in several American cities.

III. Unitarianism

Unitarianism also played an important role in the emergence of Humanism as an organized movement. Several of the leading founders of Humanism in the U.S. were Unitarian ministers. Interestingly, the Unitarians in the U.S. were descendants of the Puritans who originally settled in Massachusetts. Although the Puritans are usually known for their religious orthodoxy, rigidity, and intolerance, by 1800 one faction had become very liberal. Their ministers and seminary professors were highly educated and were influenced by the scientific outlook of the Enlightenment and by the study of textual criticism, which was casting doubt on the divine origins of the Bible. The name *Unitarian* comes from their rejection of belief in the deity of Jesus Christ and the Trinitarian view of God. Throughout the nineteenth century, they became increasingly liberal, rejecting a literal interpretation of the Bible, belief in miracles, and other

supernatural beliefs. They were quick to accept Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. (As an interesting side note, Darwin's maternal grandparents, the Wedgwoods, were Unitarians).

By the early 1900s, the liberal religious views of a number of American Unitarian ministers had led them to doubts about the very existence of God and any sort of supernatural reality. These people began to advocate a religion based on humanism (as they called it), with a focus on human potential rather than divine intervention. They retained the organizational structure of the church, along with religious ideas of spirituality, morality, social action, concern for others, and so on, but without belief in God, life after death, or supernatural entities.

Three of the leading proponents of this humanistic approach to religion are particularly worth mentioning. John H. Dietrich became the minister of the Unitarian church in Minneapolis in 1916. He was the first person to use the term *Humanism* to refer to this new religious perspective. He became a well-known radio preacher, proclaiming the message of religious humanism to the American public. Curtis W. Reese, a Unitarian minister in Des Moines, Iowa, published a book entitled "Humanism" in 1926. Charles F. Potter left the Unitarian ministry and founded the First Humanist Society of New York City in 1929. Among the members of this society were such luminaries as John Dewey, Will Durant, and Helen Keller. Many other Unitarians were involved in founding local Humanist societies throughout the United States, and in the formation of the American Humanist Association.

In 1933, the first *Humanist Manifesto* was published, setting out the principles of Humanism in 15 theses. This document presented Humanism as a new sort of religion for humanity which, it was hoped, would replace theistic religions and supernatural belief systems and bring harmony and peace to the world. It was signed by a number of Unitarian ministers, as well as some professors of philosophy and theology, and one Reformed Jewish rabbi.

As Humanist views spread through the Unitarian churches, they were strongly opposed by members who still held theistic beliefs, leading to a great deal of controversy and dissent within the denomination. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, this conflict was generally settled, and Humanism became an accepted part of Unitarianism. Today, nearly 50 percent of Unitarian-Universalists still identify themselves as Humanists, and many of the members of Humanist associations in the U.S. and Canada are also members of Unitarian-Universalist congregations.

Humanist Organizations Today

Today there are numerous local and national Humanist organizations in many countries of the world. The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) was founded in Amsterdam in 1952, with Julian Huxley (the grandson of Thomas Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog") as its first president. This is the umbrella organization that oversees Humanism worldwide, and has more than 100 member organizations in 40 different countries. It publishes a magazine entitled *International Humanist News*, which can be downloaded for free on the Internet.

The American Humanist Association was founded in 1941, and has local chapters throughout the U.S. It publishes *The Humanist*, a bimonthly magazine. The Center for Inquiry (CFI) is another Humanist organization in the U.S., which was founded in 1991 by Paul Kurtz, a philosopher and author of numerous books. Its headquarters are located in Amherst, NY, just outside of Niagara Falls, where they have an extensive library, offices, a publishing house, and facilities for meetings and conferences. They also publish several magazines, including *Free Inquiry* and *Skeptical Inquirer*.

In Canada, Humanist Canada (formerly the Humanist Association of Canada) was founded in 1968, with Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the well-known advocate of abortion rights, as its first president. Also in Canada, Canadian Humanist Publications publishes a quarterly magazine

called *Humanist Perspectives*. Thriving Humanist organizations exist in many other countries throughout the world, including Britain, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

With its long past and short history, Humanism is a naturalistic life stance that offers an alternative to religious belief systems. Humanism promotes the value and potential of each individual human, an ethical lifestyle, responsible caring for the natural environment, and joyful celebration of life. We owe a great deal to the courage and insight of a long line of pioneering thinkers and reformers who have preceded us.

Highlights from the Age of Reason

The Age of Reason was a Deistic pamphlet published by Thomas Paine in three parts in 1794, 1795, and 1807. It is a document that criticizes institutionalized religion and challenges the legitimacy of the Bible. A few of the highlights are listed below.

Paine believed in one God who created the universe and then did not interfere or influence the affairs of humankind on earth. He did not trouble himself about the existence of an afterlife, but hoped it could be a possibility.

He believed in the equality of humans and that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy and endeavouring to make fellow creatures happy.

Jesus was a virtuous and amiable man who preached the most benevolent kind of morality. His great trait was philanthropy. The gospel writers brought Jesus into the world in a supernatural manner and were obliged to take him out through a supernatural event.

Christianity is really a pious fraud encouraged by the interest of those who make a living by preaching it. The church has set up a system very contrary to the character of the very person whose name it bears.

Redemption through the crucifixion of Jesus defies all reason. Humans are not condemned because Eve ate an apple.

The concept of the Trinity, (Christian math), is nonsense. Jesus is the son of God in the same manner that we are all God's children.

The Bible is a human invention, not the inspired word of God. The proverbs are not unusually profound and the prophets are really poets. Jesus wrote nothing. The true word of God is the creation we all behold. The true meaning of the original Biblical writings can sometimes be altered and distorted in translation.

The age of ignorance commenced with the birth of Christianity and remained until the Protestant Reformation, which allowed science and reason to evolve. Unfortunately the Protestant churches have segmented into a plethora of denominations. Paine's church was his own mind. True religion is an appreciation of the creations of God and applying fair treatment to one's fellow humans.

If ever a universal religion should prevail, it will not be anything new, but instead will consist of getting rid of redundancies.

Humanist Association of London And Area – 2010 Membership Application

Membership in the Humanist Association of London and Area (HALA) expires annually on December 31st. If you have not already renewed, or wish to become a member of HALA, please follow instructions below.

	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Household</u>	<u>Limited Income</u>	
			<u>Individual</u>	<u>Household</u>
HALA Membership Fees -	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$10.00	\$15.00

HALA fees may be sent to Membership Secretary Dave Mabee at 70 – 84 Chapman Court, London ON, N6G 4Z4, or may be paid at any of our regular meetings. Payment should be by cash or by cheque made out to The Humanist Association of London and Area.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail _____

Paid \$ _____ Cash

Paid \$ _____ Cheque