



The Enlightenment



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

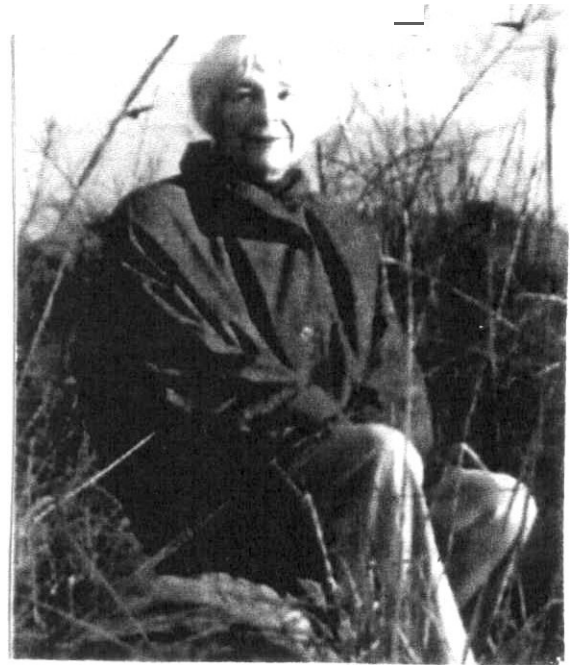
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A Canadian Philosopher, Sociologist and Educator

Pat Duffy Hutcheon is a former professor, sociologist and educator. She has studied/taught in three countries. Her undergraduate degree is in education with a major in history, and her PhD (from the University of Queensland Australia) is in sociology. At one time she was the Head of the Educational Foundations Department at the University of Regina. She has received a number of awards, including a Canada Council citation of 'Master Teacher' when she was teaching secondary school in the public school system. The Humanist Association of Canada named her Humanist of the Year 2000, and she received the Distinguished Humanist Service Award from the American Humanist Association in 2001. She was the Canadian voice on the committee of drafters of the new Humanist Manifesto III issued in 2003 by the American Humanist Association. Her scholarly articles have appeared in journals in Holland, Norway and Belgium. Great Britain Ireland and Australia as well as Canada and the United States. Her 1975 textbook, *A Sociology of*



Pat Duffy Hutcheon

Canadian Education was the first ever published on that subject and was widely used (both nationally and internationally) for over a decade. She has authored four more books, *Leaving the Cave: Evolutionary Naturalism in Social Scientific Thought*, (1996). *Building Character and Culture*: (1999), *The Road to Reason: Landmarks in the Evolution of Humanist Thought*, (2001/03) and *Something Lost: a murder mystery novel set in the faculty of a fictional western Canadian university* (2004). A Japanese version of *The Road to Reason* was published in Japan in 2004 and a Korean version has been accepted for publication as well.

Pat Duffy Hutcheon's philosophy is one of natural humanism and is beautifully outlined in the final chapter of *The Road to Reason* under the title of "A World View For the Global Village." The essence of this philosophy is summarized in the last two paragraphs on page 6 in the article "Something Missing," in this issue of *The Enlightenment*.

President's Remarks

We have a new, more centrally located meeting place now, and are looking forward to seeing an increase of both new and familiar faces as a result. Keep an eye on our website, as John Pope continues to volunteer his time working on it for us.

Let's all try to promote humanism and goodwill to humankind as we near what is perceived by nearly all to be the season of religious celebration.

Up-coming Meetings - At the Cross Cultural Learning Centre, 505 Dundas St.

November 10th 7:30 PM - DVD-The God That Wasn't There

December 8th 7:30 PM -For Goodness Sake- A presentation by Goldie Emerson

January 12th 7:30 PM -A presentation on the subject of medical marijuana

The Steering Committee of the Humanist Association of London and Area

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Vice President- Don Hatch- 472-6167- e-mail, dahatch@rogers.com

Secretary- Harold Koehler- 453-5452- e-mail, hkoehler@execulink.com

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Member at Large- Bill Chefurka- 471-3407- e-mail, pchefurka@execulink.com

Member at Large- Goldie Emerson- 657-7178- email, gandjemerson@execulink.com

The Humanist Association of London and Area meets at Cross Cultural Learning Centre, 505 Dundas Street in London, on the second Thursday of the months September to May inclusive. The Enlightenment is published quarterly in August, November, February and May.

Visit our web site at www.Popamoto.net/Humanist/Humanists.html Our Web Master is John Pope, jpope@wwdc.com

New members are welcome. Contact Secretary Harold Koehler at (519) 453-5452. Membership fees are listed below.

	<u>HAC</u> <u>Basic</u>	<u>HAC Limited</u> <u>Resources</u>	<u>HIC magazine</u> <u>Optional</u>	<u>London</u>
Single	\$30	\$15	\$18	\$10
Family	\$35	\$20	\$18	\$15
Life	\$500			N/A

Religious Identification Survey

The American Religious Identification Survey, (ARIS), conducted in 2001 under the auspices of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, (CUNY), was a follow-up study of a similar census in 1990. The poll utilized a sample of over 50,000 randomly selected respondents. It is described as "the most comprehensive portrait of religious identification in the U.S. today." Very briefly, it revealed, for instance, that Roman Catholics as a percentage of the population decreased nearly 2%. The Protestant proportion dropped sharply from 60% to 52%, a 13% decrease.

One of the most significant findings was the change in that segment of the adult population "identifying with no religion". In 1990, 14.3 million or roughly 8% identified with this category. The 2001 ARIS count showed that the non-believer population grew to 29.4 million, roughly 14.1% of the American population, a 76% increase.

This growth in secularism is particularly interesting. American media consistently give Christian spokespersons opportunity to express their bias in the most favorable light. Almost without fail, this always includes statements maligning secularists. Rarely, is any secularist given the same opportunity to state why the secular view might be more meaningful or intellectually honest than the Christian view. Most significantly, secularists have no national platform or organized leadership or financial funding remotely comparable to Christians. In spite of all these drawbacks, the secular view is spreading significantly faster than Christianity.

Secularism does not necessarily equate only to agnosticism or atheism. Pantheists and deists, though believing in God, accept a secular worldview. Atheist means "without theism" or without God belief. The atheist has considered the evidence for a God and concluded the evidence is insufficient. Agnostic means "without knowledge". Agnostics believe only the material realm is capable of exact knowledge and that it is impossible to know whether there is a God. Pantheists believe that God and the universe are the same. Deists base their belief in God solely on reason. Deism's God created the universe and then abandoned it. God assumes no control over life, exerts no influence on natural phenomena, and gives no supernatural revelation.

Atheists include Thomas Edison, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, H.L. Mencken, Warren Buffet, and Carl Sagan. Pantheists include Albert Einstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Deists include George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Payne, Benjamin Franklin and James Madison.

Why do people of such extraordinary intellect value the secular over the religious? Why does the bible's threat of hell and promise of heaven not affect these people as it does others? Is it any wonder That secularism is such a threat to some Christian clergy? Pope Benedict XVI contends that the chief adversaries of God and the Church are secularists. Baptist Tim LaHaye, author of the best-selling "Left Behind" rapture novels in his book "Mind Siege" claims secularists undermine America's patriotism and moral fabric.

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(Survey Continued)

Agnostic Robert Ingersoll said, "The notion that faith in Christ is to be rewarded by an eternity of bliss while a dependence on reason, observation, and experience merits everlasting pain, is too absurd for refutation, and can be relieved only by that unhappy mixture of insanity and ignorance called faith."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women's suffragist leader stated. "The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation."

Journalist H.L. Mencken stated, "The Christian religion is fundamentally opposed to everything I hold in veneration – courage, clear thinking, honesty, fairness, and above all, love of the truth."

Astronomer Carl Sagan said, "My view is that if there is no evidence for it then forget about it. An Agnostic is somebody who doesn't believe in something until there is evidence for it, so I am an agnostic."

President Abraham Lincoln said, "The Bible is not my book, nor Christianity my profession. I could never give assent to the long, complicated statement of Christian dogma."

Pantheist Albert Einstein said, "I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own – a God, in short who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear of ridiculous egotism."

President Thomas Jefferson said, "The Christian god can easily be pictured as the same god as the many ancient gods of past civilizations. The Christian god is a three headed monster; cruel, vengeful and capricious. If one wishes to know more of this raging three-headed beast-like god, one only needs to look at the caliber of people in the clergy who say they serve him. They are always of two classes: fools and hypocrites."

President James Madison said, "During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and insolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution."

Granted the above views are harsh, stinging and undiplomatic. Nevertheless, the contributions to America of non-religious people with secular views are overwhelming, worthy of respect and appreciation, not vilification.

Editors Note: There is little doubt that since 2001 the number of people identifying themselves with no religion has increased in both Canada and the United States. The 2001 Canadian census revealed that 18% or about 5 million Canadians marked the no religion box on the census form. By now the figure is probably 20% in Canada and most likely a little lower in the U.S.

Something Missing

By Donald Hatch

A most interesting question is posed in the article, "Religious Identification Survey", on pages 3 and 4 of this issue of *The Enlightenment*. Why do people of extraordinary intellect, such as Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Carl Sagan and the others mentioned, value the secular over the religious? Surely this is not a difficult question to answer. One would expect that most people who possess extraordinary intellect (as well as those who engage in critical thinking) would be expected to seriously question any belief that has a supernatural, unscientific aspect, and is based solely on faith.

A more difficult question in my view is, how, in our post-Darwinian scientific age, religious leaders are still able to convince many millions of people to believe in supernatural events - events such as a virgin birth, a physical resurrection, and creation of the universe in six days by an omnipotent, all-knowing, benevolent God that hears and answers prayer.

Probably the most likely reason for such easy acceptance of the supernatural is tradition. People who grow up in a religious family are indoctrinated with their beliefs in their formative years and usually don't bother to question them. Another factor is the promise of life after death, a belief which can be very comforting at times of bereavement. Also, many church-goers do receive a sense of fellowship, peace of mind and spiritual fulfilment from belonging to a church and attending services. I have heard people say that attending church recharges their spiritual batteries, and I have heard Catholics say that attending mass and confession gives them a pleasant feeling of relief. (Could this be relief from guilt?) Yes, the facts are that millions of people are being attracted to religions expounding the supernatural, while only a few thousand people are attracted to humanism's natural, straight-forward, logical principles.

The reason there are not more humanists is particularly puzzling when the latest Canadian census showed that about five million Canadians checked the "no religion" box on the latest census form. These people, who are referred to as "nones," should be candidates for having an interest in humanism, but there is little evidence of this, most likely because the majority of "nones" are not interested in religious or philosophical matters. Their interests are in sports, TV and movies, and many are so busy with their jobs and raising families that they just don't have time to think about anything else. One would think, however, that maybe, just maybe, one percent or 50,000 of the "nones" might be candidates for humanism, but not even 0.1 percent or 5000 have been attracted to the Humanist Association of Canada, (HAC). This is surely the minimum membership required to operate a credible organization. In fact there are barely more than 0.01 percent (500) paid up members. There must be something missing, but what is it?

I believe one of the roots of the problem is the term "secular humanism," which to me, and I think to many non-humanists, immediately suggests atheism and a lack of emotion. Just look at the evidence. For the right-wing evangelicals and fundamentalists, secular humanism acts as a lightning rod inducing them to proclaim on national TV that secular humanists are "agents of the devil." Even Buddhist Robert
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Thurman, in an article in the February 12th 2005 issue of the *Globe and Mail* states, "...secular humanism is materialistic and about stuff. It has the dogma that only matter exists, there's no mind, no spirit." How in the world can humanism go anywhere if these misleading conceptions exist in the minds of the general public? People must be made aware that humanists are emotional beings, possessing a non-religious sense of spirituality, and if the truth be known, are most likely less materialistic than the average person.

In her book, *The Road to Reason*, Pat Duffy Hutcheon avoids the term "secular humanism." When she does use an adjective, it is usually "naturalistic" or sometimes "scientific." Now, it is true that many humanists do indeed proclaim to be atheists. This is fine, and to be expected, but humanists are not cold hearted secularists devoid of emotion. In the end, I believe that most humanists will attest that humanist principles encompass much more than atheism, as Pat Duffy Hutcheon explains in the final chapter of *The Road to Reason*. In this concluding chapter the author expresses her hope that the book has helped draw people to humanist perspectives, to identify in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of the philosophy of humanism that is often referred to so ambiguously. Perhaps the greatest source of confusion concerning the philosophy today is the old "theism versus atheism" issue. Atheism or "free thought" is not, in itself, sufficient foundation for any philosophical stance. Humanists today are committed to science as the best method yet discovered for constructing knowledge and testing its reliability. This stance is the reason humanists emphasize the unity or universality of the scientific approach as a means of identifying the operation of cause and effect in human behavior and society, as well as at the organic and inorganic levels of existence. It is why humanist epistemology can best be described as one of agnosticism, as Thomas Huxley explained it. (For Huxley, agnosticism is the fundamental axiom of modern science: Do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable.)

In the past, humanist organizations have sometimes made a serious mistake in attempting to define the movement by what they opposed, rather than what they stood for. Opposition to superstition and transcendental religion, in itself, does not guarantee a future for humanism. The most important lesson to be learned from the great thinkers whose ideas have shed light upon the "road to reason," is that humanism can best be understood in terms of the premise of evolutionary naturalism as its necessary condition (in contrast to spiritualism, transcendentalism and other forms of dualism). We can conclude from their teachings that humanism involves three additional principles, implied by its major defining premise of mankind's common origin with other animals. All three stem from the distinctiveness of the human species within that common nature: (1) an emphasis on the process of human knowing and on the priority and universality of the scientific, empirical approach as a means of building knowledge; (2) an appreciation of creativity and the products of human imagination and technical skill; and (3) an overriding focus on morality as the unique responsibility of humankind, (with universally applicable humanitarian principles in the role of guideposts). Humanism then, is a modern world-view that might, just possibly, save the emerging global village from self-destruction in the perilous years ahead.

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Now beliefs and principles alone do not make for an effective, successful dynamic association destined to improve society. It depends to a large extent on attracting dedicated, competent people who cooperate and work well together toward achieving agreed upon aims concerning worthwhile causes. And then there is the matter of leadership and administration. Past leaders, like the present leader, have been and are dedicated, intelligent people with demanding full-time jobs. Wouldn't it be great if HAC membership could grow to the point where it could employ a nationally well-known personality to work full time with other like-minded organizations in voicing concerns and strong opinions on important issues such as Sharia law, gay and lesbian rights, and the separation of church and state. Now, more than ever, the challenge of HAC is to build a membership consisting, not just of atheists, but of agnostics, deists and pantheists, as described in the "Religious Identification Survey" article. Why should humanist organizations not welcome all people who shun organized religions, who want to improve conditions in society and the environment, but are not ready to make the leap to atheism?

The Humanist Association of Canada is now at a crossroad, trying to decide whether to be a top-down, centralized organization or a bottom-up organization of local chapters sending representatives to a central board. The present board members are diligently trying to sort this out and arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. Let's hope that they can achieve unity and devise effective plans to increase membership and achieve financial stability. Finally, local chapters need to find ways of encouraging more of their members to join HAC. Obviously this will be easier if HAC is seen to be a dynamic organization in full view of the public, achieving concrete results in selected causes, leading to the betterment of our society and the world.

Report on the October 13th Meeting

For the first time the Humanist Association of London and Area held their regular monthly meeting at the Cross Cultural Learning Centre at 505 Dundas Street in London. The meeting room at this central location proved to be of ideal size for our organization. About 25 people attended but the room could accommodate up to about 50 people. The room is located just inside the back door at the parking lot in the rear.

The speaker for the evening was UWO professor Dr. Robert Scott who outlined the current Canadian situation vis-a-vis NAFTA. The topic is of special interest at this time due to the unresolved dispute over soft wood lumber. Dr. Scott also discussed a few other issues where NAFTA is not working in Canada's favour. In retrospect it seems that although NAFTA may be advantageous to some Canadian importers and exporters, the Canadian negotiators left some severe loop-holes that work to the advantage of the United States. After the talk Dr. Scott fielded a number of questions that generated much interesting discussion.

Goldie and Jackie Emerson generously supplied juices and cookies for this occasion. We will attempt to arrange for coffee at future meetings.

A Robert Ingersoll Quote The true civilization is where every man gives to every other, every right that he claims for himself.

Declaration of Humanist Principles

- 1] Humanism aims at the full development of every human being.
- 2] Humanists uphold the broadest application of democratic principles in all human relationships.
- 3] Humanists advocate the use of the scientific method, both as a guide to distinguish fact from fiction and to help develop beneficial and creative uses of science and technology.
- 4] Humanists affirm the dignity of every person and the right of the individual to maximum possible freedom compatible with the rights of others.
- 5] Humanists acknowledge human interdependence, the need for mutual respect and the kinship of all humanity.
- 6] Humanists call for the continued improvement of society so that no one may be deprived of the basic necessities of life, and for institutions and conditions to provide every person with opportunities for developing their full potential.
- 7] Humanists support the development and extension of fundamental human freedoms, as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and supplemented by UN International Covenants comprising the United Nations Bill of Human Rights.
- 8] Humanists advocate peaceful resolution of conflicts between individuals, groups, and nations.
- 9] The humanist ethic encourages development of the positive potentialities in human nature and approves conduct based on a sense of responsibility to oneself and to all other persons.
- 10] A fundamental principle of humanism is the rejection of beliefs held in absence of verifiable evidence, such as beliefs based solely on dogma, revelation, mysticism or appeals to the supernatural.
- 11] Humanists affirm that individual and social problems can only be resolved by means of human reason, intelligent effort, critical thinking joined with compassion and a spirit of empathy for all living beings.
- 12] Humanists affirm that human beings are completely a part of nature, and that our survival is dependent upon a healthy planet which provides us and all other forms of life with a life-supporting environment.