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Humanism and Religion: How to use one to understand the other

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Humanism is a concept that was more realized than discovered during the Renaissance era (cultural awakening) in Europe during the fourteenth century. Since then, it has developed in the way we look at, not only the arts and architecture, but also the way we view religion. It helps incorporate ideas and ethics of human action to how we focus on the belief, values, and morals we derive from religion. If anything, humanism has helped the spiritual form of religion to grow. However, it is not in any way, shape, or form limited to people who have an expressed religion, for it may also pertain to those who claim that they are of a different persuasion, such as Atheist."

Humanism and Religion: How to use one to understand the other

by

Manar Darwish

Humanism is a concept that was more realized than discovered during the Renaissance era (cultural awakening) in Europe during the fourteenth century. Since then, it has developed in the way we look at, not only the arts and architecture, but also the way we view religion. It helps incorporate ideas and ethics of human action to how we focus on the belief, values, and morals we derive from religion. If anything, humanism has helped the spiritual form of religion to grow. However, it is not in any way, shape, or form limited to people who have an expressed religion, for it may also pertain to those who claim that they are of a different persuasion, such as Atheist.

The intellectual movement placed an emphasis on the individual worth of a person rather than focusing on the religious aspects of society prevalent in the medieval period of Europe. Humanism not only celebrated the dignity of persons, but also encouraged the study of classical works. Humanists, during the Renaissance, undertook cultural feats in the arts, politics, and sports. These scholars began to question traditional thoughts and ideas that had previously institutionalized religion as the dominant form of educational supremacy.

Through this inquiry, humanists sought to reintroduce the classical Greek values to educate the public. Therefore, ancient Athens and its philosophers, historians, artists, and so on, became prime examples for the development of European society. Languages, such as Greek and Hebrew, were studied to aid in the understanding of religious notions and philosophies. The latter gives an indication of how humanism helped inspire understanding of religious scripture, through which people were able to derive spirituality rather than just a code of what is right or wrong or both.

According to Corliss Lamont, in his paper *The Affirmative Ethics of Humanism:*

Humanist ethic and that of Christianity and the traditional religions is that it is entirely based on happiness in this one and only life and not concerned with the realm of supernatural immortality and the glory of God. . . . Christian insistence on the resurrection of the body and personal immortality has often cut the nerve of effective action here and now, and has led to the neglect of present human welfare and happiness.

In other words, happiness can be achieved through logic and reason. Also, Lamont has expressed that humanism has helped shape the beliefs of individuals, without the constant burden of having to place religious morals before contentment of the soul, which allows more room to experience the life given to people in a more active manner (hence, the arts). This is unlike a pattern that calls for strict devotion and obedience to laws highly regarded, but otherwise, less understood. Such laws are understood to be dogma of religion. Dogma, according to *Webster's Dictionary*, is a code of principle of beliefs.

Humanism has no such tenet simply because it is a philosophy of human interests and values. This may be seen as one of the distinguishing key factors between how we perceive the liberal system of ideas and the doctrines of religion. According to *Humanism: Philosophy vs. Dogma*, another aspect that differs greatly between the two is that the principles of humanism are tentative with time, while religious dogma, specifically that of Christianity, has not changed for over 2000 years. This brings us to the understanding that humanism helps incorporate patterns of our lives to comprehend fully what is not only around us, but what is also within us. It does not make one unethical; yet it makes one more responsibly aware, when deciding the actions he or she

might take. Also, religion is not meant to be negative. In fact, the notions and ideas of humanism may have a significant impact in determining and realizing religion through new expression, leading to spirituality that connects the mind, body, and soul.