

Soulism

Blithering Genius

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Contents

1 Humanism is the Post-Christian Religion of the Modern West	1
2 Soulism: The Individual Soul and the Human Spirit	2
3 Truth, Value, and Emotions in Humanism	2
4 Biological Realism Is Taboo And Rejected	2
4.1 Sexuality And Gender Identity	3
4.2 Racial Differences	3
4.3 Sex Differences	3
5 The Ultimate Goal Of Action	3
5.1 The Christian View of Action	3
5.2 The Humanist View of Action: Hedonism	3
5.3 The Soulist View of Value	4
6 Soulism Vs Worldism: Values	4

1 Humanism is the Post-Christian Religion of the Modern West

You are not IN the universe, you ARE the universe, an intrinsic part of it. Ultimately you are not a person, but a focal point where the universe is becoming conscious of itself. What an amazing miracle. – Eckhart Tolle

Humanism is the religion of the modern West, but it is not recognized as a religion. Few people explicitly identify as “humanist”. However, almost everyone in the West is an implicit humanist, even those who identify as Christians. Humanism is the dominant worldview, and it defines the frame of public discourse.

To be clear, I’m not talking about humanism as defined explicitly by people who call themselves “humanists”. Explicit humanism is a more “autistic” version of the implicit humanism that emerged during the 20th century in the West. I am talking about the latter: the worldview of the modern West.

Humanism is post-Christian. It emerged from Christianity, and it retains much of the moral and mythical structure of Christianity, but without God. Humanism replaced God with humanity, and (to

a lesser extent) nature, as the focus of worship. It transferred divinity from God to humanity.

The omniscience of God was transferred to humanity as faith in reason and science. The omnipotence of God was transferred to humanity as faith in technology and progress. The benevolence and moral authority of God was transferred to humanity as faith in human empathy, compassion and altruism.

Humanism *sacralizes* human nature.

2 Soulism: The Individual Soul and the Human Spirit

I thought of a new word for humanism: “soulism”. Humanism discarded the notion of God, but retained the notion of the soul. Instead of theism, we have soulism.

There are two versions of the soul in humanism: the individual soul and the human spirit. Every person has a unique personal identity and inner life. That is the individual soul. The human spirit is the common essence of humanity, which includes reason and empathy. Those who manifest the human spirit are rational and good. Each individual contains the potential for reason, happiness and goodness, and has intrinsic moral worth.

This is not a rational view of human nature. It is a religious view, which is protected from critical thought by taboos.

The humanist soul differs from the Christian soul in some important ways. The Christian soul is immortal and immaterial. The humanist soul is neither. However, although humanists believe that the soul has a biological basis in the brain, they avoid thinking about that basis. Terms such as “reductionism” are used to dismiss rational inquiry into human nature, which would conflict with the religious view of the soul.

3 Truth, Value, and Emotions in Humanism

In Christianity, God is the ultimate authority and the basis of truth and value. In humanism, the human spirit is the ultimate authority and the basis of truth and value. Reason is the ultimate basis of truth. Hedonism is the ultimate personal value. Altruism is the ultimate moral value. Supposedly, empathy bridges the gap between personal and moral value. Humans (those who manifest the human spirit) want to be altruistic, and thus derive happiness from altruism. The emotions are the sacred source of value. Love is the most sacred emotion, because it motivates altruism.

This explains certain aspects of the modern worldview. It explains how morality has been reduced to “love, not hate”. It explains the veneration of emotions. It explains the rejection of biological realism about human nature.

4 Biological Realism Is Taboo And Rejected

Humanists celebrate sexual deviance, such as homosexuality and transsexuality, while rejecting biological norms of sexuality. Why?

4.1 Sexuality And Gender Identity

To view homosexuality and transsexuality as disorders, you must apply a biological standard to human nature. You must judge behavior by adaptiveness, not by the standards of hedonism and altruism. You also expose human nature and the individual mind/brain to rational analysis and explanation. This is heresy. It *desacralizes* human nature, the individual mind/brain, and specifically the emotions.

The celebration of sexual deviance has become a public religious ritual, because humanism is our public religion. Celebrating sexual deviance is an act of worship. It is worship of the soul.

4.2 Racial Differences

The taboo on race differences is another aspect of soulism. Why does our culture deny the existence of innate differences in mental traits between races? If races have different intellectual abilities on average, then reason is not a sacred essence. It is an adaptation, and also an ability that varies. If races have different tendencies to commit violence on average, then altruism is not an innate characteristic. Emotions are an evolved mechanism. Different environments selected for slightly different emotions, and thus for differences in behavior.

4.3 Sex Differences

There is a similar taboo on sex differences that involve the brain. Few people deny that there are physical differences between men and women, but many deny that there are mental differences. This is partly due to leftist ideology (feminism), as is the denial of race differences (anti-racism). Recognizing mental differences between sexes or races is labeled “hate” and “oppression”. However, there is a deeper reason for these taboos. By recognizing mental differences between races and sexes, you deny a universal human spirit. Also, you expose human nature to rational analysis and critique. This desacralizes human nature.

5 The Ultimate Goal Of Action

There is another important aspect to soulism: that the ultimate goal of action is to affect the soul.

5.1 The Christian View of Action

Christianity has that assumption in a different form. Our mortal lives are transient. Our actions in this life are ultimately about the long-term good of the immortal soul. Action in the world is not ultimately about changing the world. It is about changing outcomes in the spiritual realm. To be “worldly” is to be misdirected. Enlightened people care about spiritual matters, not worldly matters.

5.2 The Humanist View of Action: Hedonism

In humanism, this has become the assumption that we act into the world only to affect souls: our own souls and the souls of others. Life is not about changing the world. It is about changing subjectivity. It is about having a better consciousness.

Hedonism is an unexamined assumption of humanism. Hedonism is the belief that pleasure and pain are the ultimate source of value. To a hedonist, the purpose of life is to pursue pleasure

and avoid pain. Pain and pleasure are intrinsically valuable. Anything else is only valuable if it is instrumental to how we feel.

Hedonism inverts the functional relationship between feelings and action. Biologically, feelings are instrumental to action, not vice versa. We feel in order to act. The purpose of life is reproduction, not changing the state of the brain. The brain generates subjective feelings and value judgments as part of the process of generating action.

For example, hunger causes you to eat. The function of eating is not to feel pleasure. The function of eating is to provide your body with the energy and matter that you need to survive and reproduce. The pleasure is the experience of satisfying hunger. It indicates an improvement in your biological condition.

5.3 The Soulist View of Value

The soulist believes that the soul is what intrinsically matters, and anything else is merely instrumental to the condition of the soul. Again, this mirrors Christianity. The enlightened soulist looks down on worldly concerns, such as reproduction, or the perpetuation of one's society or ethnic group. The soulist views worldly concerns as misguided or even evil.

This focus on the inner self has many popular manifestations, from adventure tourism to pop psychology. People invest enormous amounts of energy to have certain experiences, or to improve their inner selves. They seek a promised inner utopia, which never emerges.

6 Soulism Vs Worldism: Values

There is an important distinction between soulism and *worldism*. Soulists situate value in subjectivity. Worldists situate value in objectivity.

The primacy of subjectivity is a very deep assumption. Soulists find it hard to understand worldists. They tend to reinterpret worldist values in soulist terms. A worldist concern about the future of civilization is interpreted as "hate". A worldist desire to reproduce is interpreted as seeking happiness or ego-validation, etc. The soulist always views values as instrumental to subjective outcomes.

A scientific understanding of human nature is kryptonite to soulism. Biological realism desacralizes human nature. The brain is an evolved mechanism with a biological function. The emotions are not a source of intrinsic value. They are a mechanism for motivating adaptive behavior. We are selfish, not altruistic. We have the capacity for both positive and negative empathy, both love and hate.

Science doesn't tell us what to value. But a biological view of human nature reveals biological purpose, and that our psychological values have biological functions. It exposes the value inversion of soulism. It offers another way to think about value.

Christianity has a somewhat antagonistic attitude toward science. Humanists claim to love science, but try to control the institution of science from within, to protect human nature from scientific inquiry. Many Christians reject the theory of evolution. Most humanists accept the theory of evolution, but reject its implications for human nature. Humanists accept modern cosmology, but they tend to interpret the cosmos in relation to subjectivity. "I am the universe becoming conscious of itself" is a typical humanist mantra, which *recentralizes* humanity within the cosmos.

Christianity and humanism are often portrayed as opposing worldviews, but they have a lot in common. Humanism has inherited much of the conceptual substructure of Christianity, in a modified form. Humanism is not a rational worldview. It is a soulist religion, which has replaced a theist religion.