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In Defense of Secular Humanism

Paul Kurtz

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Are the fundamentalists shaking the foundations of the American republic?

- When they condemn humanism's influence in the schools, are they not actually attacking modern education, science, culture, and philosophy?

- Is it possible to be moral without benefit of clergy or creed?

- Can humanism help open doors so that individuals, singly and in cooperation with others, can create lives that are rich in enjoyment, eloquent and meaningful?

What is humanism, and why have humanists come under attack by religious conservatives and the fundamentalist right? "Humanism is not a dogma or a creed," writes Paul Kurtz. "Humanists have confidence in human beings, and they believe that the only bases for morality are human experience and human needs. Humanists are opposed to all forms of supernaturalistic and authoritarian religion. Many humanists believe that scientific intelligence and critical reason can assist in reconstructing our moral lives . . . Humanists believe in freedom and pluralistic democracy as virtually our first principle, and we are disturbed by any authoritarian effort to impose one point of view on America. Defense of the open, democratic society should be the first point humanists make in response to the Moral Majority, making it clear that in our reading of the American tradition, pluralism is essential."

In Defense of Secular Humanism is a volume of collected essays by one of the leading exponents of secular humanism. It is a closely reasoned defense of one of the most venerable ethical, scientific and philosophical traditions within Western civilization.

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