

Understanding the Ideas that Shape Our World Part 2

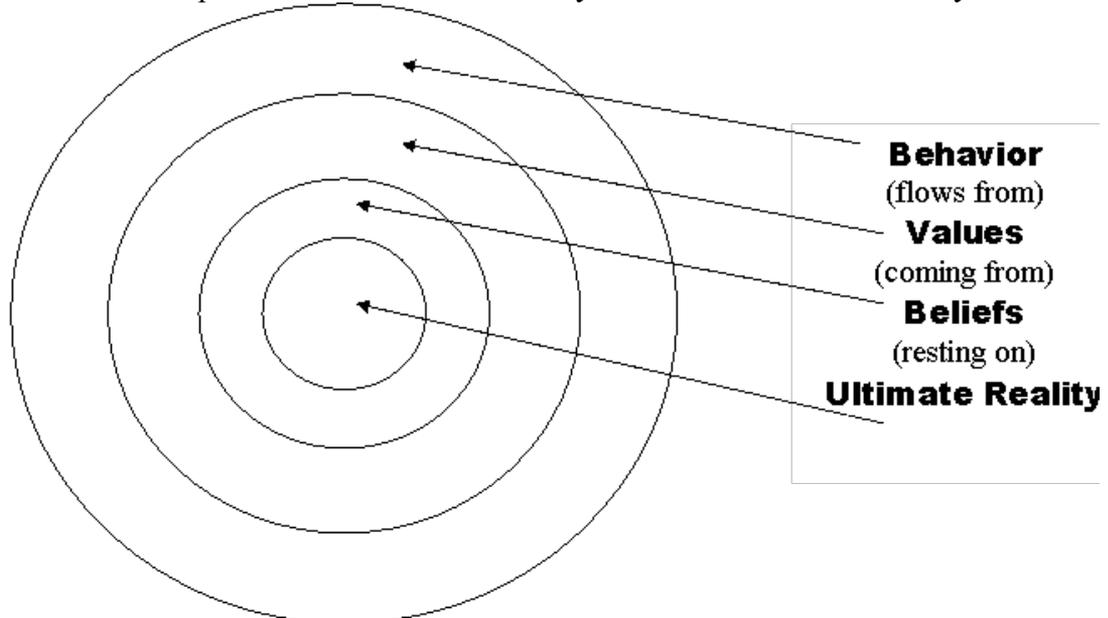
I. INTRODUCTION

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Romans 12:2

A. Recap

1. Let's briefly review last week's study on Worldview.
2. A Worldview is a person's *whole sense* of *reality* & how it translates into *daily choices*.



- a. It begins at the level of what one considers the *Ultimate Reality*,
 - b. And extends from there to *beliefs* about what is true,
 - c. From there to *values* about what is best,
 - d. Resulting in the choices that are observed in the realm of *behavior*.
3. We saw there are 5 basic worldviews, arranged around their views of the universe & God.
 - Theism – God is both *in & beyond* the universe. God is *personal & infinite*.
 - Atheism – there is *no God*; the universe is all there is.
 - Pantheism – God *is* the universe = The universe is God. God is *infinite & impersonal*.
 - Panentheism – God is *in* but *not beyond* the universe. God is *finite & personal*.
 - Polytheism – There are many gods *in* but *not beyond* the universe. They are *personal & limited*.

B. Spun-Off Philosophies

1. These worldviews have spun off various *philosophies* – ways of *relating* to the world.
2. We're going to look at some of the more prominent & influential philosophies of our day.
3. These philosophies are passed on & taught through many different mediums in culture.
 - a. one's nurture base – the home & family
 - b. culture at large
 - c. education

- d. peers
- e. the media
- 4. Philosophies are often revealed in the *slogans* people use.
 - a. They're reflected in *popular sayings*
 - b. And the *idioms* of speech that develop.
- 5. What's *surprising* is discovering that an individual can hold *several conflicting* philosophies all at the same time.

II. SECULARISM

A. Introduction

1. The first philosophy we'll look at is *Secularism*.
2. The reason why is because secularism is the umbrella philosophy of our time.
3. Most of the other philosophies we'll look at are really just *branches* of secularism.
4. Secularism is the philosophy that places all emphasis on *this world*, to the *exclusion* of the supernatural realm of eternity.
5. It's the philosophy of the Atheist.
 - a. Since there's no God, and the universe is all there is,
 - b. The atheist puts all his/her attention on the *natural world*, realm of the physical universe.

B. Secularism Defined

1. The word 'secular' comes from the Latin 'saeculum' which means 'world.'
 - a. But it's the 'world' in a *specific sense*.
 - b. It's "the world of the **'here & now'**"
2. Secularism is a philosophy that contends there's only one reality that's knowable – the natural realm perceived by the 5 senses.
3. For the secularist, *reason & logic* are the *only tools* for apprehending reality.
4. The realm of the spirit & the supernatural isn't just *beyond* the senses, it *doesn't exist!*
5. *All* that exists is the world of the here & now.

C. Secularist Slogans

1. Secularism has profoundly shaped our culture.
2. We'll take a closer look at the *history* of secularism when we look at Humanism, because the two philosophies have effectively merged into one.
3. Where secularism is most *obvious* is in the slogans people use.
 - a. Probably the most blatant expression of secularism comes from some years ago.
 - 1) Those in their late 40's & 50's will remember the Schlitz Malt Liquor slogan: *You only go around once in life. You gotta' grab for all the gusto you can.*
 - 2) After that ad appeared, millions of Americans adopted the motto, "Go for the ***gusto!***"
 - 3) It was the epitome of the secularist philosophy – saying all that matters is the here & now, squeezing every ounce of pleasure you can out of the moment with no regard for the consequences.
 - b. Pepsi pitched their cola to the "NOW Generation"
 - c. Nike's sold tens of millions of athletic shoes with their motto, "Just Do it!"
 - 1) Don't waste time thinking about it.
 - 2) Don't stop to consider anything else.
 - 3) All that matters is this moment & what you do with it.
 - 4) So slip on a pair of these and do it!
4. John Lennon sang the atheist secular anthem when he recorded the song, "*Imagine*" & millions sang along . . .

Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try,
No hell below us, Above us only sky,
Imagine all the people living for today...
You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one,
I hope some day you'll join us, and the world will live as one.

D. Antagonism

1. Another place we see secularism today is in the realm of **law & public policy**.
2. You'd have to have been living under a rock for the last 15 years not to know that public expressions of faith have come under increasing fire.
3. The removal of prayer from the public schools in the early 60's began a trend of secularist judges systematically prohibiting public expressions of religious faith.
4. It's gotten to the point now where religious faith is seen **by many** as something that can **only** be private & personal.
5. Any appeal to faith as the basis for **affecting society** is taboo.
6. The hew & cry in the recent presidential elections, how the Evangelical Christians voted on the basis of their religious convictions & a faith-based morality was deemed by many in the popular media as **Un-American**.
7. Their idea is that it's fine if Christians want to go to church, but what they learn there **cannot influence** their decisions about living in the **real world**.
8. The "real world" being, of course – everything outside the **make-believe** of church.
9. For the secularist, church, the Bible, & faith are all **irrelevant**.

E. A Christian Response to Secularism

1. How does the Christian respond to secularism?
2. There are many passages which speak to it.
3. Really, the **whole Bible** is a refutation of Secularism because its underlying premise is the existence of God & the realm of the supernatural which secularism rejects.
4. But the verse that probably deals most specifically with secularism is Matthew 6:19-20

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

- a. Secularism says, "There's no heaven! The only place to enjoy life is here & now."
 - b. Jesus refutes that & says the **here & now** is not the end all or be all of life.
 - c. The **Hereafter** is a higher reality that the 'here & now' must be tempered by.
 - d. The things of this world are **temporal** & passing, but eternity awaits,
 - e. And the way we live in this world, the choices we make here & now, affect the **quality** of our eternity.
5. The secularist says this life is all there is & when you die, end of story.
 6. In Luke 12:22-23 Jesus said –

22 " . . . I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. ²³ Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing."

- a. There is more to life than just the physical.
 - b. Life includes the realm of the spirit & we live in the light of eternity.
7. The Secularist claims to have the corner on reason & says that those who hold to religious faith are irrational.

- a. They base that on their claim that *science* supports their philosophy.
 - b. “There is no *evidence*,” they say, “for the realm of the supernatural.”
8. This is a *false premise*.
- a. Science, by its very *definition* is *limited* to the *physical* universe, the realm of *nature*.
 - b. The *Supernatural*, by *its* definition is *above nature*.
 - c. Of *course* there’s no *physical evidence* of the *supernatural*.
 - d. The very *definition of the words* means there *can’t* be.
 - e. But both reason & logic *demand* the existence of the supernatural realm.
 - f. The existence of the physical universe *requires* the existence of God.
9. Paul says it this way in Romans 1:20 -
Since the creation of the world [God’s] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.
- a. To put it in a nutshell, Paul is saying, “Creation requires a **CREATOR**”
 - b. The existence of creation requires the *prior existence* of something *higher* than the creation.
 - c. If there was ever a moment when there was nothing, then now there would be NO THING – because nothing can do → nothing.
 - d. So there must be *something*, which by the very definition of *things* owns it’s own existence – it is self-existent & *eternal*.
 - e. And this first thing gave rise to everything else – so the first thing must be *all powerful*.
10. Simple child’s logic proves this.
- a. [The old game of “Where did God come from?”]
 - b. We live in a cause & effect universe.
 - c. But an *infinite regression* is *logically impossible*.
 - d. Reason *demands* that we *begin* with an Ultimate Reality which is eternal and self-existent.
 - e. That is the very *essence* of what the Theist means by God.
11. In Romans 1:20, Paul says that the *evidence* for God & the supernatural realm is the universe’s *existence*.
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12. As Secularism has expanded its influence, Christians have been increasingly pushed from the public square.
- a. The secularist says that public policy *cannot* be influenced by appeals to religious convictions.
 - b. But in 2 Cor. 10:5, Paul says that we are to bring *every* thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
 - c. Christians cannot be faithful to God & consistent in their faith & vacate the public square *just because* the Secularist says so.
 - d. It would be *hypocrisy* to say we obey God then live some *privatized* version of faith.
 - e. **EVERYTHING** is to be made subject to Christ, including our politics.
 - f. Jesus said that as His followers obeyed Him, they would be salt & light – **IN THE WORLD!**
 - g. Salt & Light speak of “*Influence*” – so faith in God can’t be kept private at the same time it’s obedient.

III. HUMANISM

A. Introduction

1. Closely linked to secularism is *humanism*.
2. In fact, that's usually the way it's branded, as *Secular Humanism*.
3. Some people get confused between humanism & *humanitarianism*; they're not at all the same.
 - a. A humanitarian is someone who has a concern for the welfare of humans,
 - b. Specifically, those who are needy.
4. Humanism is something else altogether as we shall see.

B. The History of Humanism

1. It turns out - Humanism is an ancient philosophy.
2. It was first advocated by the Greek philosopher Protagoras with the motto, "*homo mensuras*" = "Man is the measure."
3. What Protagoras meant was that all values had to be determined by humanity itself, without regard to anything higher.
4. In humanism, man is the *measure* of everything. He becomes the *ultimate being & authority* - the *center of existence*.
5. While Christianity is *theocentric* – God-centered, humanism is *anthropocentric* – man-centered.
6. As a philosophy, humanism didn't really capture too much attention until the 16th Century & the Renaissance.
 - a. The people of Europe grew tired of the corruption of the Roman church & began to question its authority.
 - b. This rift led to two movements;
 - 1) One movement led to the *Reformation* through *Martin Luther*,
 - 2) The other led to the *Enlightenment* through *Erasmus*.
 - c. Erasmus' motto was '*ad fontes*' which means "*to the source*."
 - 1) What he meant was, "Let's get back to the origins of civilization, rather than just blindly accepting the authority of the church hierarchy."
 - 2) "They say their authority comes from the *authors* of the faith – let's see for ourselves – let's go back to the authors, the sources."
 - d. Erasmus then led an *investigation* of the origins of Western civilization, the classical Greeks of the Golden Age; Socrates, Plato, Aristotle.
 - e. He also studied the original Greek manuscripts of the Bible.
 - f. It was Erasmus who prepared the Greek NT known as the *Textus Receptus* which became the basis of the King James Bible.
 - g. Erasmus realized that the Church had deviated far from its scriptural roots.
 - h. Luther followed through on Erasmus' discoveries by calling the church back to the authority of the Scriptures, & the Reformation was launched.
 - i. Erasmus continued his investigations into the Greek philosophers & resurrected many of their writings, *including Protagoras' humanism*.
7. Once the Reformation cracked the hegemony of the Roman church over the intellectual life of Europe, those who had *no interest* in religious faith called for an acceptance of *atheism*.
8. This movement gave birth to the *Enlightenment* in the 18th Century, & humanism quickly rose as the premier philosophy.
9. From the early 17th through 18th Century, the Reformation dominated Europe.
10. But in the 19th Century, the Enlightenment replaced the Reformation as the pre-eminent intellectual view.

11. In order to *compete* with the ever more popular humanism of the Enlightenment, theology began to change; redefining itself along lines that were more acceptable to the intellectuals.
 - a. Many theologians de-emphasized the supernatural elements of the Bible.
 - b. The miracles were re-interpreted as *myths* meant to teach spiritual lessons.
 - c. The Virgin Birth & the Resurrection were re-worked as nothing more than stories for a pre-scientific age which ‘enlightened’ men & women no longer needed.
 - d. The Gospel & Christianity were reduced to nothing more than a *religious ethic*.
 - e. This movement was known as “*theological liberalism*.”
 - d. While many theologians became *liberals*, many others remained steadfast & held to the supernatural element of the Faith. They were called “*Fundamentalists*.”
12. Today, Humanism has merged with Secularism into the dominant philosophy of our culture.

C. The Slogans of Humanism

1. Some of the slogans of secular humanism are –
 - The brotherhood of man.
 - Separation church & state.
 - Democracy not theocracy.
 - Have faith in yourself.
 - Life is meaningless. But you can expect a good lunch.
 - Self-esteem; is a part of what is known as the Human Potential Movement – the idea that mankind can be perfected through psychology & technology giving evolution a helping hand.
2. Earlier I quoted Lennon’s song Imagine. Listen to the rest of it . . .

Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try,
 No hell below us, Above us only sky,
 Imagine all the people living for today. [Secularism!!!]

Imagine there's no countries, It isn't hard to do,
 Nothing to kill or die for, No religion too,
 Imagine all the people living life in peace.

Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can,
 No need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man,
 Imagine all the people sharing all the world.

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one,
 I hope some day you'll join us, and the world will live as one.

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3. Lennon’s song is a classic example of the complete *illogic* of secular humanism.
 - a. He speaks of the *great value of life* when man & man alone is the measure.
 - b. He lays the blame for war & greed at what door? Faith in God!
 - c. But if there’s no God, no heaven, no hell, no eternity, if this life is all there is, then from where does man draw his worth?
 - d. If man is the measure, & there is no absolute standard of right & wrong, then there are no *transcendent principles* to live by – only *preferences*.
 - e. And *whose preferences* will set the course for life? Those who have the power.
 - f. The very thing Lennon wants to avoid by ejecting God & faith are the things he will

have in spades if he gets his way – violence, greed, war, murder, mayhem.

4. Integral to SH is the belief in *evolution*, that man is nothing more the fortuitous combination of molecules.
5. I like the way RC Sproul critiques the *silliness* of SH.
Man is a cosmic accident. He emerges from the slime by chance. He is a grown up germ. He is moving inexorably toward annihilation. Yet [according to SH] man is the creature of *supreme dignity*. He lives his life between two poles of meaninglessness. He comes from nothing; he goes to nothing. His origin is meaningless, his destiny is meaningless. Yet, *somehow*, between his origin and his destination he acquires supreme dignity. Where does he get it? Out of thin air.
6. The thinking SH has to realize that if there is no God, no eternity, & this life is all there is, then there are *no values*, only preferences.
 - a. There is no morality – only choices.
 - b. Why care about law, or right & wrong, or the poor, or anything else?
 - c. All that matters is getting my own piece of pie.
7. Humanism is responsible for some of the most abominable events of the 20th Century.
 - a. *The Holocaust* was fueled by a humanism informed by evolution.
 - 1) Evolution – progress – perfect humanity.
 - 2) Began with infirm, disabled, mentally unstable.
 - 3) Then Gypsies, Jews.
 - b. *Communism*, a political form of secular humanism, murdered many millions of people in it's pursuit of perfecting human society & pressing it into it's ideal.
 - c. Earlier in the 20th Century right here in the US, the government embarked on a campaign of chemically & surgically *sterilizing* people with Down's Syndrome & other conditions that were deemed to be a threat to public health, and the evolutionary progress of humanity.
8. Lennon's idea of a SH Utopia is more than a tragic myth, it is a dangerous lie.
9. Man will not, and cannot be good *without God*.

D. A Christian Response to Humanism

1. The Christian response to Humanism is the same as that for Secularism, because as I said, in our day, they are really one & the same.
2. Man is *not* the measure – *God is the measure* of all things.
3. Values are not merely preferences – they're eternal & unchanging because they're based on truths that do not change.
4. Man has dignity, not because he invents it out of thin air, but because he's created in the image of God.
5. Life is meaningful, not because a man or woman *assigns* meaning to it, but because God created him/her for His *own* reason & purpose.
6. And ultimately, in the final judgment, the truth of the value & dignity of every human being will be made evident to all.
7. The Cross of Christ is the enduring sign pointing to the value God places on human beings.

III. CONCLUSION

Discussion – As we went through this material, what slogans, sayings, evidences of secular humanism did you think of?

Do you think secular humanism has influenced you? If so, how?

How can we ensure secular humanism does NOT become influential in our lives?