

The Human in Humanism: Why (I think I am) a Humanist?

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In some senses, I identify quite easily and clearly as a Humanist: the context of the human creating meaning and existence, opposed to or different from some transcendent explanation for being. The world and our being in it, is intrinsically secular. Yes!

On the issue of the human in Humanism, I am not so clear, rather hesitant to say that I am certainly a Humanist. My work and interests have centered in exploring and extending the various approaches to the nature of human nature. Here, I find myself a critic of many Humanists, and a champion of rethinking Humanism to account for our critique of earlier ideas of the human condition, and to move its thinking...forward.

Humanism has seemed to rely heavily upon an earlier mechanistic depiction of the human to certify its reliance on science, and has not yet expanded its thinking to include more recent (principally *scientific*) knowledge. This includes ideas-for example-about functional anatomy; and the notion that humans are social-by our very nature-and about individuality as an emergent phenomenon. In these contexts, I am less clear about my relationship to Humanism. As our notions of the human are some complicated potage of diverse ideas from various sources, my work is concerned with understanding the human in greater depth and breadth, thinking, like Protagoras, that we humans are the measure of all things, and we need to explore the human both to understand us and to critique the ways in which we humans have described/inscribed the world.

In this essay I will explore my work and intellectual leanings with respect to both aspects of the title: I. The politics of re-

ligion; and II. My thinking and work concerning human nature issues and their potential importance in an evolving Humanism.

I. The politics of religion: a critique of the dangers of religious thought as it translates into American (or world) politics in this peculiar moment of change, greed, and rethinking of the world. This story is palpable, fairly contained, and will have an increasing voice in the American setting, at least for the next several years.

II. My doubts about me and Humanism center themselves more directly upon whom I have chosen to be, and the subject of my intellectual life-work. This continues to evolve, and is by now written out or writing itself at some length. It centers roughly upon the human condition, how arguments and ideas about human nature are shaped and shape themselves. This work is a critique of the history of these ideas as they have been set in Western thought, particularly. Its aim is to rethink and reframe many of the ideas about the human which derive from the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, and to re-place issues of our being beyond the dualisms of mind and body which have framed issues of human nature.

I agree with most Humanists in that these ideas direct and frame our being toward a more participatory future. However, in this context, I find myself less a defender or explicator of any Humanism, than wanting to write and rewrite the ideas of Humanism toward its future; especially taking the increasing comparatist critique and knowledge of the human and building this into a viable Humanism.

Mulling the Millennium

I guess that the lessons of my education having to do with the notion that the world would inevitably become more and more rational, seemed quite odd to me even early on. Looking around at the ethnic communities of Buffalo where I grew up, not much could be accounted as precisely rational. In my neighborhood, Protestants, Jews, and (mostly) Irish Catholics lived closely together, but were light years apart in most of their tendencies and

habits. Language and culture, who spent time together, the ideas and habits of each group, were never breeched too much outside of school and sports. Friendship developed within ethnic fraternity structures whose reach lasted well through collegiate days. My family were all people-watchers, and I joined them as a tacit aspect of my being.

My early education was public and ordinary. I was a pretty good violin player, but there was little encouragement to go on into a world of classical music which was, at that moment, poor, its future bleak. My undergraduate education was, shall I say, fairly uneventful: general sciences, mostly math and biology, a significant smattering of physics and chemistry, and my favorite, geology: few intellectual flashes (I loved embryology, taught in three colors); a couple of teachers who tried to get me to step beyond my patina of education as preparation for I was not coming up to earlier expectations of mine or anyone else. Intensity, but nowhere to take it. Closed-in by a community in which success was defined as being a professional.

Possibilities of penetrating this small world or puncturing holes in its well-practiced boundaries were remote until I was accepted to medical school. The summer before I was to matriculate, I began to think a bit more; glimmerings of seriousness. The idea of holy cures at Lourdes, raised in some still remote part of my thinking the wonder of the idea of bodies which had been in a line of self-development, needing a cure. What is a cure? What, a disease? What is health?-among my earliest sort-of-serious puzzles. And I attended a couple of evangelistic tent meetings, watched some people who claimed to be cured with the laying-on of hands. Hmm.

Medicine as a career didn't take, although I learned a great deal and raised many more questions many of which wander in various places in my being: about the human form and how we happen to look like we do; and why do others look different? And

what do these questions mean? Such ideas were not particularly well received within the medical faculty. Why not? Hmm.

On the way to returning to school in Anthropology and Linguistics, I became a programmer and systems analyst for a couple of years at Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory in Buffalo in the mid 1950s. Luckily for me, many of my colleagues during this brief period were university professors who could not afford to be at the university in that particular moment, and I learned a good deal about their ways of thinking and doing. This training and thinking became a part of who I am; the last time, that is, that the holists tried to retake much of the intellectual landscape back from the reductionists embodied these days as systems thinking. I feel quite grounded in these traditions and ways of thinking.

Scroll ahead 20 years: the kooky 1970's when all the cults showed up on the University of Minnesota mall that spring day. It was a carnival with different groups dressed up, all with booths and information cards. The school newspaper printed a spoof of the entire religious landscape, something about wondering how Jesus would think about all of this, and whether he was active in its creations. All hell broke loose: the university, usually very staid and above it all, kind of freaked-out in 70's parlance and one of the editors, an advisee of mine, was given a pretty rough time. Hmm.

In the late 1970's a Protestant evangelist-fundamentalist pastor in Minneapolis directed a letter to some faculty at the University of Minnesota. Recipients were faculty whose departmental curricula included some course with the term, evolution, in its title. This meant anthropology (my department), geology, and several of the departments in biology.

The note exhorted us to include a course on Scientific Creationism, to parallel and augment our course offerings in evolution: to be renamed Scientific Evolutionism. Evolution was apparently being attacked by rewriting, revising, or repositioning. In other words, evolution was being placed in a new context, parallel

or equivalent to creationism. My neighbors and colleagues promptly dismissed them as *kooks* or *crazies*. I found them fascinating.

I had (always!) intended as a part of my approach to any encompassing anthropology, to someday think about the nature of religion. But the time for that inquiry came quite directly, as this letter materialized. Actually, a friend had already urged me to become more invested in the issue following the recent mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana: a movement which had attracted a childhood friend.

This movement struck me hard, as I read the text Henry Morris had written, entitled *Scientific Creationism*, and prepared with several others to do battle with these ideas.¹ We created a symposium at the University of Minnesota over this issue, and a number of us gave testimony at a special meeting of the Minnesota House of Representatives Committee on Education, on whether to teach creationism in the public schools.

It was this engagement which directly led me to the activities which seem to give me a natural direction toward becoming a Humanist. Then, as now, however, it remains somewhat less of an intellectual directive than a political concern, where I see the possibility of redirecting a sort-of-democracy into a theocracy. It is my self-appointed task to help develop a critique of this movement.²

There is a role for the anthropologist in this discussion particularly since the role of language and culture turn out to be one of Morris' major concerns, along with geology and biology; a concern which has taken backseat, at least so far in the dialectic between the politics of religion and pursuit of science. But the issues of human nature will remain central to this religion-science polemic, and I intend to remain active in its arguments.

Questions which arose surrounding this polemic: Was this an inroad for bringing religion into the public schools? It seemed significant that the University of Minnesota is chartered as a Land

Grant University, a public University; in effect, an advanced public school run by the State of Minnesota and governed by its laws. In such schools the study of religion per se is forbidden by law, although one can study about religion usually in departments or courses called *religious studies*.³

My colleagues in anthropology showed little interest for themselves, with some tacit approval of my interest. In most minds the Scopes trial of 1925 was unrevisitable; definitively won by evolution once and forever. How unthoughtful and incorrect this was-illustrating their (our) poor understanding of the power of ideas and texts-has only recently become clearer in American politics.

It was also about this time and around these issues that Philip Regal and I began reading together with a group of students, the book *Snapping*⁴ which explores cults and the techniques and mentalities of conversion. It tries to show how those who are seeking, can be indoctrinated into *Scientology* or *EST* or any of the groups which seem to promise a *religious* ...something. Stories about deprogramming of former cult members were surfacing. What *do* they seek, those who join cults, return to fundamentalisms and literalisms?⁵

My anthropological interest was piqued. I talked with colleagues, neighbors, and students who had been brought up as fundamentalist Protestants, but had moved from that to more liberal, critical positions (their terms). Their talk was about the *Book of Revelation*, and about their attempts to move out of strict religious upbringings. They instructed me about those who remain within this mode of thinking, and about those who are newly attracted to it.

These times and talks challenged my long held teachings that we (all) would become more and more rational. The United States in the 1970's were reminiscent of an extended fieldwork stay in indigenous Mexico where I had first encountered mystique and mysticism, shamans and seers, curers in competition with Western

scientific physicians. I have completed the draft of a book which tries to account for the modes and means of fundamentalist thinking in these times: *Prediction or Prophecy*.⁶

I now observe the growth of interest in creationism at the University of Minnesota, and have been witness (the sole Humanist?) to a discussion about the retaking of the university conceptually by Christians: fieldwork? voyeurism?

In sum, I am a Humanist, certainly and definitely to join the polemic in which religious, anti-Humanist ideas have become political, threatening to take us in this millennial moment toward a theocratic form of government. In this context I equate Humanism with various forms of republican democracy and worry about its futures.

The Human in Humanism

Other aspects of my intellectual odyssey, I feel are primarily Humanistic, but here I am less certain who I am, or more especially where I might *belong*. I often find myself a critic of some aspects of Humanism in many of its Enlightenment ideas, wishing it to change and to evolve. The evolution entails, particularly, an involvement with our changing understandings of the human condition and of human nature. In these areas, I consider myself and my work to be critical and pioneering, even quintessentially Humanistic-on good days.

How to access this part of the biography is less clear. Back to training: I was educated to be an anthropological-linguist, in terms which were current in the 1950's. Much of the intellectual engagement was with ideas coming from the comparative linguistics of Sapir and Whorf, amplified by notions of cross-cultural understandings of communication and gesture, most directly following the Chicago School of the philosophical pragmatist George Herbert Mead; he, much influenced by John Dewey. In the more anthropological genealogy, I was in a line following Franz Boas and his students/friends, especially Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and

Ashley Montagu-co-author of the United Nations *Declaration of Human Rights*. Anthropology included culture, language, and the physical; to be extended into the broadest possible study of human nature.

This study was to be of the human condition generally, but specifically including the gestural body in communication: a presumptive idea that humans are social *by our nature*, and that individuality is somehow *emergent*. This insight retains the idea of individuality so central to any Humanism, but recasts several of the problematics of language, knowledge, rationality, and morality which had remained intransigent essentially since Plato, and his student, Aristotle.

We needed, as well, to remain comparatist in order to see our own seeing; to go away; to learn to wear new lenses, to be able to note the ordinary of our own cultural assumptions. This study included the observation of other species, as well as other cultures and languages. I now call this *An Anthropology of the Ordinary*, an aspect of a *Philosophical Anthropology*.

I/we spent two years doing fieldwork in Chiapas, Mexico examining the language and cultural aspects of some Highland Mayan communities. As has been my habit since, being away provided me with a distanced perspective and interest in America, which I have pursued in various ways-not the least in terms of its politics. I taught for several years, for example, a *Brief Course on America* for incoming Fulbright Graduate Fellows from all over the world; and have recently proposed such a course for all new students at the University of Minnesota. The comparative perspective of distanced observation of the human condition has been key to my thinking: from other cultures and times, other species, even machines. Questions of scale of time and space, of the gravity in which various species live, of community and individuality, invest my thinking about how to re-see our own viewing.

Scroll forward. The later 1990's, just completing *The Foundations Project*, a summation of much of the work which

would attempt to rethink the human in Humanism. A project 30 years in the developing, from a sense that Western allopathic medicine had cast our being narrowly and mechanically, and that the Humanities focused solely on the mental aspects of our being. How had this dualistic approach to human nature survived? Who are we that we seem, even we Humanists, to be caught so deeply in historical depictions of the human that we do not think we have to observe, to rethink; only think that we have to read to know ourselves: the human in Humanism?

Scroll up. More intellectual biography: It was right around the time when I emerged with a PhD in the early 1960's that Noam Chomsky⁷ seemed to revolutionize the world of thinking about the human. Language was where *it* was at: what precisely, I wondered, was *it*? Mind and language; language and mind-buzz words, bandwagons, or truth? What happened to us in nature, the body, gestures, the literal noises of language and communication, others, cultures? *Deep structure* would tell us who we are: but, I noted, we so love *surfaces* of faces, and spend much of our living constructing being within our thinking about faces; gestures, communication. I used to get angry at thinkers who were smug about the uniqueness of humans due to language. Hmph.

It was at about that time as well when the beginnings of comparative study of other animals in their natural or feral condition took hold; when the Gardners⁸ taught chimps to use human sign-language; and deaf kids were permitted, finally, to use sign-language in deaf schools. I became friends and colleagues with them and with Bill Stokoe of Gallaudet College for the Deaf, who brought sign language into some legitimation. Why, we all wondered, had *deaf* been equated with *dumb*? Language, mind, body, gesture? The human equated with verbal language only, and sign language suppressed in all schools for the deaf until 1972. Why did we so exclude the handicapped and call them *freaks*; who were the humans in Humanism? (Confession: I wear a visible prosthesis which most others do not spot, and have always been sensitive to the plight of those of us who are somewhat odd or irregular!)

In the context of the physical, it was also then that there was a broad rethinking of human anatomy which had, until then, been derived essentially from the idea of the body-as-cadaver. As we moved into the zero gravity of space travel, it became clear that human anatomy and physiology is much more dynamic/functional than had been thought. Boas had been correct several decades earlier that how we look has much to do with changes in culture, casting the nature-nurture issue into the harder grounds of cranio-facial anatomy.⁹ The ideas which move orthodontialO and plastic surgery, and the practice of medicine in getting patients up and about as quickly as possible grew from this work. (Most of these ideas have, as far as I can see, have not yet entered the thinking of most biologicalallbehavioral sciences!)

I discovered that the practice of medicine depicted the human form as generally passive, leading to a battle just now being engaged by sports medicine, and by some (serious) aspects of osteopathy and so-called *alternative* medicine which have generally been either neglected or merely dismissed as being outside of *scientific* medicine. This is to say that basic issues of human anatomy are currently being debated in various forums, and Humanism ought to educate itself to these issues, rather than simply siding with a mechanistic-cadaveristic model of the human.

A major concern of my work has thus been with locating the lines of scientific, scientific, and mystical thinking, having noted-as example-that some very basic ideas of human anatomy continue to be cast narrowly, if not precisely incorrectly. I note that many of the disciplines concerned with human description or behavior have tended to focus on quite narrow aspects of being, and have attempted to extend these to the entire human condition: e.g., Chomsky's linguistics, the idea that the brain and/or nervous system fully determines our being, and other such claims which do not look at us in the broadest possible contexts, or do not review or own modes ofusuallhabitual viewing.

Beyond Chomsky, other (academic) revolutions-in the field of Psychiatry, where I worked for several years: behaviorism replacing therapy; biologism at odds with talk; pills, and the question of curing, once again.

Then sociobiology emerged, making clearer the disparities between a fixed, pre-determinate approach to understanding of the human, at war apparently with a culturological change-plasticity model, that sounded-oh so strangely-like the fixity of the creationist argument arguing against the same biologists when they proclaim evolution. Well, biologists are apparently of two minds when thinking about humans, depending on whether they oppose religious or anthropological thinkers: change/evolution when arguing with religionists; fixity when polemicizing with anthropologists. Biologists: can't live with them, can't live without them. Hmm.

While I felt I understood a good deal about the nature of the human and most of the boundaries which distinguished us from other species, I began to suspect that the notion of the human which I was later to find in Humanism, was a considerably more complex and contested notion than I had earlier thought.

My education in the politics of science, especially when it comes to the human, was just beginning. Biopolitics! What an odd notion. I hung out with a bunch of ethologists during this early period, but gradually we split particularly over the works of Konrad Lorenz and his students. The section in Lorenz' *On Aggression* which describes the human not only is anti-Darwinian in its proclaiming the qualitative uniqueness of humans due to language, but sets up Lorenz *et al.* as the only possible interpreters of the human condition, all to be derived from observing other species.¹² Politics, biology, human nature! But all this argumentation got me to Darwin's two late works, which I find still very powerful.¹³ Hmm.

My work those days was primarily in describing language and trying to record the nature of bodily gestures in the context of the psychiatric interview. How does therapy/curing *work*? What do curers do, what are their techniques, the nature of their presen-

tation; how do they think, proceed? A cure?-once again. This work seemed very promising, but it was disrupted eventually by the rise of behaviorism, and the virtual abandonment of interest by psychiatry in these questions and in anthropology. I left researching full time for an academic job at the University of Minnesota in 1966.

Lessons pondered: academic-intellectual revolutions occur, and converts or those who refuse to change for various reasons become winners/losers in ways affecting jobs, outlooks, support, legitimacy, recognition."or not. A lesson: I need to study academic revolutions, see how they work, run their course. More of an education in the politics of ideas, and in the nature of institutions as they are affected by the marketplaces of ideas = the sociology of knowledge. How powerful are the politics of disciplines in setting the curriculum of the study of the human? How is Humanism affected by the Zeitgeist, thinking all the while it rests upon some clear science(s)?

Answer: a good deal more than I would have thought. Bad, at least complicating news for Humanism which would seek a clearer/cleaner way to truth and rationality.

More Lessons: the necessity to study and update the curriculum which has, by now, become so very full and complicated (165+ PhD programs at the most comprehensive U. of Minnesota). Many of these disciplines *talk past* one another, or oppose one another, or try to replace or co-opt the other: e.g., the Humanities vs. Sciences runs quite parallel to the creationist argument against science. Since I have been teaching *Sciences and the Humanities* the past couple of years, I've noted that the postmodernist attempt to co-opt science as merely another text or narrative, is very similar to, and prepares the ground for the return to religious texts. A characterization: the *World-as-Text vs. the Text-as-World*.

An essay, more interesting perhaps in this time than those, on *Communication Across Disciplines*; treats the disciplines essentially as cultures.¹⁴ I learned to live/survive in the academic inter-

slices, desperately seeking, sometimes finding places from which participantly, not patiently, to observe. Lessons: that the so-called behavioral sciences construct the idea of the human often in the oddest ways. Where should Humanism locate, derive, settle, or direct its ideas of the human?

Humanism and rationality: bedrock? My voyages around the disciplines had yielded the observation that there are at the least four different versions of the idea of rationality, all of which are wandering inside all of our heads, waiting for applications, often appropriate ones: rational = logical in philosophy, irrational = psychotic in psychiatry, rational = greed in economics, rational = a reasonable, middle-class person in law. Wow! Humanism at the gates; the human in Humanism...?

I worked on notions of language all during this early time of my times. If language is emergent?-my first big work: we don't learn language and/or the world; we learn to read our parents, thence their language as it views/constructs the world. G. H. Mead taken to the theory of knowledge, the problem of other minds, all of that. My first important (!?) work: a grammar of interaction and discourse; the Question-Response System-how we know the world, how we know other(s') minds.¹⁵ This effectively replaces the idea of any grammar of sentences, of the individual as constructing language directly from her/his experience, and opens the question of how we know other minds to rethinking and to observation. Now, a central idea of The Foundations Project.

The intellectual effect of the Chomskyan revolution, for me: it caused/forced me to read philosophy, and to begin to understand how an idea borrowed most directly from Descartes, ultimately from Plato, could cause so many thinkers to think they could expose the entire human condition via a not-so-grand idea of language. My lesson: the power of ideas, surely the history of ideas to structure present reality; the power of ideas, especially in moments of doubt and/or great change-why I think the millennial idea is driving much of the present moment.

This lesson filled-in the necessary (four) subject arenas or contexts for studying and re-seeing human nature: comparative thought, history of ideas, politics of ideas, sociology of knowledge; to see-through them and to see through them. Aha!

That philosophical journey: happening upon Heraclitus, Whitehead, Confucius, Machiavelli, the Stoics; trying always to protect myself from the power of Plato and Aristotle, and to figure how their ideas sold, and really to ponder how and why they sell still. How and why do they get rethought in each generation? Why did Whitehead tell us that Western thought consists primarily of footnotes to Plato? 16 Sobering. A continuing caution: To whom am I disciple in my quests for creativity, originality, needing to understand the traps into which I have already fallen in order to...?

Why did *they* pick on language to center the study of humans? Logic, rationality, language, my love-hate relationship with the thinking of Pythagoras and the hegemony of geometry to explain most everything...Alas! The idea of what was (presumed) unique to humans to center the entire study of humans has radically underestimated how complicated we are.

The human body: how we know who is who, mostly left out of this philosophical depiction of the human, or left to the mechanistic description of anatomists whose model of being centers upon the cadaver. To be or not to be? This is the question which Parmenides saddled us with from Plato to Hamlet. The human: limited, dead perhaps; a model for life? For living? Human in Humanism?

Old habits, newly rediscovered skills and issues. I was pushed by my teachers¹⁷ to study the nature of gesture, the body in the contexts of communication, the *silent* language.¹⁸ Stopped fiddling, began to fiddle around after a fifteen year lay-off. Hands. Assymetries. Faces, I found fascinating; we humans love the face, perhaps above all it opens up the study of human infants in many new ways. How do parents see their children? How do they affect/mold their visages? Why do people look like they do?

Shouldn't we spend a good of time studying the forms and movements of other social species in order to see the human form more clearly? Why do we look like we do?

A book: *Language and Human Nature*, originally called *After Metaphysics*.¹⁹ After what? After all, what is human about Humanism? Metaphysics: best re-read Aristotle. Physics is prior? Prior to...!? We locate being as being-a-body and apparently so background this form of knowing the human, that we have all fallen in love with *after-me ta-physics*. How could this be? How can it be, still? The essential human so much reduced from the experiential/existential human: which prevails in any Humanism? My experience, so far, worries that essentialism is alive and well in Humanism.

The uncovering, for me, of Plato's *Phaedo* in which he banished the body taught me much, centering a good deal of work trying to *retrieve* the body, intellectually. Just now, trying to recast Plato in *The Foundations Project*,²⁰ in which *the foundations* are Plato's ground for establishing dualism in considering what is human: narrow, non-comparative, not necessary to view humans in all our vicissitudes; or to re-view ourselves. Susceptible we are at each and every moment to adopting very narrow viewings of our nature, then proclaim them as sensible, and as the *only* way to understand us.

Establish disciplines: psychology, the study of the *what*? Seems *cheap and easy-then*, particularly now. Banish the body, eliminate gender, solve the problem of death! Derive the religions from which Humanism continues to try and extricate itself. Amazing Plato: can we tame him, domesticate him, walk with his thinking in our heads seeing the world as it is...now?

Can we re-see humans more as *we* are, than as we have been told that *they* are, that we are to see that they are? The last Chapter in *Language and Human Nature*: 20 aphorisms which may enable us to re-see and to get *Around the Cartesian Impasse*. An entire page of thoughts upon the human face: which seems so

crucial to all of being; which has been so little studied. Why, how could this be, has been a continuing wonderment.

Yet faces are much of who we are, and who we read into others, and reflect in our own senses of self. Why so avoided? Active dis-interest, fear? Of what? An entire page which considers the human face.²¹ How do we look? Why do we look like we do? What, precisely, is the human in Humanism? What is omitted? For what purpose(s)? The politics of race, as pursued by my other intellectual genealogues: F. Boas and his students, especially Ashley Montagu. They developed as world-inclusive: who is a human, what are Human Rights. Let's face it: we are not very good at observing ourselves. How to see our own seeing? Facing it: a fetish? (Confession: I am somewhat different from whom I appear to be!)

Questions from the readings trying to extricate my work from the obscurity of being caught in the revolutions which had also become my study: issues of being and identity upon continuing reading in the heavies of last century: Nietzsche and Kierkegaard trying to extricate themselves from the bonds and bounds of their religious forbears, also asked me to rethink all of thinking.

Nietzsche's experientialisms: live on the edges and boundaries, each of us to explore the Dionysus within, we knowers are unknown to ourselves; shouldn't we knowers be pursuing Zarathustra's quest; where has the concept of wisdom gone in this age of information-and knowledge about what? Nietzsche, the declarer of the death of God, and the prophet of nihilism. Ruminations. Intellectual dyspepsia.

Kierkegaard's existentialism: don't disciple yourself to any church or intellectual structure; live like (e.g.) Christ lived; walk the walk; deep, serious. Oh, your God: it's all too hard, too complicated. Religious thinking, full of pity, pity-full. Lots of work to be done somewhere in here: much of the *Foundations Project*. His attacks on our being disciplined to various institutions and modes of bureaucratic thinking inspire: *The Idea of a University in the*

Present Age. Trying to envision the future University of Minnesota, cast as centering its being about the most pressing issues of these times: an analysis of what's wrong, and how this place, in this town, can frame its future outside the usual notion of the modern university.²² A single-member political action committee. Wouldn't you like to help me? Join this vision? The world of ideas seems to have some openings in this changing moment. Can't we help place a framework on the future by moving a large institution?

Rethinkings in the late 1970's through the 1980's. Issues, Puzzles: Works which address various of these issues and puzzles. I became a member of the faculty of The Humanist Institute, coming together particularly over issues of the rise of fundamentalism: so I thought, anyway. Not much polemic; more a search for roots. Hmm.

Works in various stages of completion/incompletion: The Body Journals²³ -how to see, reconceptualize the human body in interaction; study of self, of others; much through the violin. Study T'ai Chi, Alexander Technique (a la Dewey), now Hatha Yoga. Now in the 1990's in The Body Group with an osteopath, acupuncturist, others reading and arguing Stanley Keleman²⁴, trying to keep in shape studying how an aging body does itself. How an anatomy based on the cadaver translates and transforms itself into the experience of moving in the world; the various attacks on allopathy, how to sustain and maintain health rather than medicine understood as curing. Curing? Health? Beyond any simple mechanical models of our bodily being, further complicating the human in Humanism. Intellectual pain, bodily pain...Ooh.

A Humanist Pedagogy? Teaching as Dialogue.²⁵ A book considering that within the world understood to be solely secular, there are so-called sacred arenas. Teaching, curing, family/friends where one is asked to yield or surrender at least temporarily some aspects of being in order to gain a greater sense of self. An examination of the politics of identity in the context of teaching how to

play with power, to enable more than to disciple students. How to take care of oneself, develop a dialogue, to be a *Teacher*. Doesn't a living and developing Humanism require a Humanist pedagogy: as a dialogue? I think so. Can we Teachers teach as if we are oracles, Sufi masters, inspiring the future, creating hope for our students toward their futures: by ourselves as examples, by...? Derived from an extended study of Nietzsche, most directly, noting that nihilism is about in the world, and thinking that the future is, in this moment, *unscripted*. But Teachers can inspire the future. What Teachers (capital T)? What teachings, what teaching?

*meditations on...Next Places*²⁶ is a kind of furtive attempt to play with the ideas of transcendence within the secular. The directive question concerns itself with where each of us might want to go in the near future, reasonably and hopefully within our lives...soon. It is a set of aphoristic meditations on being and identity, as non-prescriptive as possible: who we are that others told us to be; that others told us we are; that we told ourselves we were and/or were to be; updated to each present; directed with a sense of towardness and direction. The issue for any Humanism is to *oppose*, better perhaps to *substitute* a (transcendent) sense of becoming within life experience, rather than to look beyond existence for a mystical or divine story which undergirds or directs being. How to create a sense of futurity and hope for students in which they will live their lives, positively, thoughtfully...in a time when cynicism and the destruction of identity/being seem all the rage.

As Nietzsche invites his *true* readers to be(come) truly serious, I crafted *The Crisis in Meaning*, a set of aphorisms which attempts to layout and explore the aspectual nature of the current sense of cynicism, even nihilism, which characterizes these times.²⁷ It was, let us remember, Nietzsche who diagnosed the death of God, and laid out the *Rise of European Nihilism*. Now we live it, explore it, react to it, are the nihilists we warned ourselves about.

A viable Humanism needs, it seems to me, to include some sense of the optimistic, the positive, the hopeful. It must always

be in some mode of towardness and becoming to deserve our continuing interest; not merely to rely on some sense of positivistic science to shore-up the human as rational animal. There's trouble right here in river city, and it's up to us to say and tell it, but also do something about it! The present age is a time of change and turmoil, but also of opening and opportunity to frame the issues, questions, directions for future Humanistic thought. Don't just sit there, let's do something!

A couple of essays elicited by M. Dascal, a philosopher: *An Ethological Critique of the Philosophy of Language*.²⁸ How considering seriously the recently realized sociality of other species signals that we humans must be *social by-our-nature*: nullifying the Hobbesian history of natural law arguments, and recasting the nature of our being individuals; how we know the world, language, and so on. It begins with a quote from Augustine concerning how we move from a gestural to a verbal language. Gestural language? We have to rethink language: an old horse, but ever timely; closer to its time? A radical revisioning of the human...(in Humanism?)

Dascal had asked me to consider the forms of skepticism present in some 20th century writers, particularly L. Wittgenstein. How can we move beyond Descartes' proclamation that *I think therefore I am*? In *Cultural Pluralism and Critical Naturalism*, my combat with skepticism is engaged particularly by noting that we are bodies, that these are interesting, complicated; that the uniquely mental notion of intellection is just that: a notion.²⁹ That we know we are as bodies: opposing Wittgenstein's plaintive *if only*: if only, he could assume his right hand. We are, this essay declares, bodies in a world of other(s') bodies. Bodies are not merely vehicles for our minds, spirits, souls. If we look in the broad, we discover that the world's traditions can be understood most quickly by noting some two dozen or so life paradoxes. Most of these traditions concentrate on several favorite paradoxes, either resolving or complementarizing them. Western thought resolves the change-permanence paradox on the side of permanence, life-death on death,

sleep-wakefulness on wakefulness; others come at life quite differently.

And a rethinking of language-still, and again-in the context of biology. We need to become comparativists in order to see our own seeing.³⁰

Almost all of this leading just now to *The Foundations Project*, not to abandon the Western quest for truth, but to flesh it out within the existential/experiential: first to *retrieve* the moment just before Plato banished the body in the dialogue, *Phaedo*. We are bodies-gendered-in the world of other(s') bodies. They/we grow, change: face it; second to *invert* the notion of language-thence knowledge-being inherently in each individual. Humans are a social species; individuals emerge from social interactions with mothers/others. We don't learn or know the world (as Locke claimed), but we come to know the world as others see it to be: the grammar of Question and Response; third, to lay claim to that murky area of meaning in whose terms we know who and where we are-that is, *context*; fourth, the question of the transcendent and ideal within the ordinary; fifth, to begin to rethink meaning by questing after the notions abounding in the origin of language.

And, and...and enter the arena of claims and talk about being human: how to enter this arena, who we are since we have discovered only this century that we evolved from already social species, thus rewriting the conception of Hobbesian natural law, deflating the *born-free* laments of Rousseau and Freud. This requires, in its turn, a rethinking of morality, given the idea that morality is an aspect of sociality, not from the Kantian rationalistic are we; no purity of reason. But we do reasonably well in spite of bad philosophies, and need to rethink questions of identity and being in this time and in any future Humanism. Lastly we need to combat the nihilistic tendencies which undermine the ideas reality...actually! Whew! Phew! All my wonderments about the human in Humanism, wrapped up in a single package.

It/I go on. The millennial thinking which so abounds these days drives much of the current ennui. And Humanism needs to respond well, usefully, critically. 2,000 will likely come, then go, and we will be able to create a sense of a clearer human future.

The politics of the moment threaten to overtake all of being, the appeal to the transcendent and mystical seem more and more obvious to more and more thinkers. The human in Humanism needs to be rethought and elaborated in some of the ways this essay points to, in a developing dialogue which will, willy-nilly, be pushed by the rise of fundamentalist thought in America and in the world.

As democracy, human rights, the quest for human truths, are in a fractured and fragile moment, there are also accompanying openings in whose terms we can debate an interesting and productive future Humanism. I hope that Humanism will continue to develop, that some of the directions of the work described in this essay may contribute critically to that future.

¹Morris, Henry M. (Ed.), *Scientific Creationism*; San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1974

²Sarles, H.B., "L'attaque religieuse contre la science: une bataille pour la definition de la verite et de la connaissance, ou de la politique?" [The Religious Attack on Science: a battle for the definition of truth and knowledge: or politics?] *Theologiques*, 1994, Volume 211: 81-101.

³Most private colleges and universities in the US. are affiliated with some religious denomination even when they are (apparently) secular. Of course there are also many institutions of higher education which are directly connected to and administered by religious denominations: notably, perhaps, Georgetown and Notre Dame (Catholic) and Brigham Young (Mormon). Religious studies is usually a program in which courses in comparative religion are offered, with no particular direction or theology offered; no chapel or religious services held, and so on. Until Darwin (1860's) almost all US. universities were church related, and there was very little scientific inquiry at all. Public universities and science flourished only after that time (Metzger, 1955).

⁴Conway, F. and J. Siegelman, *Slipping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change*. Dell, 1978.

82/Humanism Today

- ³For a thoughtful, interpretive overview of this movement at that time, see Marty Martin E., "Believing in Adam & Eve: The Surge in Religious Fundamentalism Reflects a Profound Yearning for a Return to Simple Values." *Prime Time*. August 1981: 21-26.
- ⁶Sarles, H.B., *Prediction or prophecy*, 1996 ms.
- ⁷Chomsky, Noam. "Review of verbal behavior by Skinner", *Language*. 16,1: 26-58. 1968; *Language and Mind*. Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1959.
- ⁸Gardner, R.A. and B.T. Gardner, "Teaching sign language to a chimpanzee," *Science* (1969) 165: 664-72.
- ⁹Boas, Franz, "Changes in bodily form of descendants of immigrants (1910-1913). In *Race, Language, and Culture*; Free Press, 1940.
- ¹⁰Enlow, Donald II., *The Humt Face*; Harper & Row, 1968.
- ¹¹Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, U. of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh, Pa.
- ¹²Lorenz, Konrad, *On Aggression*; Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1966.
- ¹³Darwin, C., *The Descent of Man and The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*;. London: I.Murray, 1871, 1872. My work continues to be informed by his. The subject matter of the human: the study of all humans, other animals, infants, the insane, art, the aged.
- ¹⁴Sarles, H. B. Communicating Across Disciplines: with special reference to the Behavioral Sciences-a text I use in a course on Interviewing Across Disciplines (ms).
- ¹⁵Sarles, H.B., *Language and Human Nature*. U. of Minnesota Press, 1985, chap. 9.
- ¹⁶Whitehead, A.N., *Process and Reality*. The Free Press, 1929, p. 53.
- ¹⁷Trager, George L. Ray Birdwhistell, Norman A. McQuown.
- ¹⁸Hall, Edward T., *The Silent Language*. Greenwich: Fawcett.1959.
- ¹⁹Sarles, H.B., *Language and Human Nature*. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1985.
- ²⁰Sarles, H.B., The foundations project, 1996 ms.
- ²¹Sarles, H.B., *op. dt.*, pp.229-30
- ²²Sarles, H.B., The idea of a university in the present age, 1996 ms.
- ²³Sarles, H.B., The body journals,.1996, ms.
- ²⁴Keleman, Stanley, *Embodying Experience*. Berkeley: Center Press, 1987.
- ²⁵Sarles. H.B., *Teaching as Dialogue; A Teacher's Study*. Latham, MD: University Press of America, 1993.
- ²⁶Sarles, H.B., meditations on...Next Places, 1996 ms.
- ²⁷Sarles, H.B., The crisis in meaning, 1996 ms.

²⁸ Sarles, H.B., "Ethology and the philosophy of language," In *Handbuch Sprachphilosophie*. Eds., M. Dascal, D. Gerhardus, K. Lorenz, G. Meggle. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995. pp. 1700-1708.

²⁹ Sarles, H.B. "Critical naturalism and cultural relativism." In *Cultural Relativism and Philosophy: North and Latin America*. Ed., Marcelo Dascal. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1991. Pp. 195-214.

³⁰ Sarles, RB. . "Essentialism and evolutionism in the nature of language: the biology of language." In *The Biology of Language*. Ed., Stanislaw Puppe!. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995. pp. 221-255.