MODERN PAGANISM is a group of religious movements influenced by historical pagan (polytheistic, or simply non-Judeo-Christian) beliefs of pre-modern Europe. While contemporary pagan movements are diverse, a number of beliefs are commonly shared, namely, the recognition of the divine in nature. Pagans worship the divine in many different forms, including feminine, masculine, and gender-neutral images. Ecologically, pagans seek to live in a way that minimizes harm to the natural environment. To most modern pagans, life is to be affirmed joyfully as long as other people are not harmed by one’s endeavors.

One of the schools of thought within paganism is humanistic or naturalistic paganism. Its central elements are naturalism and the responsibility to meet life’s challenges without recourse to supernatural aid. In other words:

- Viewing deities as metaphorical, poetic... and not as causal agents external to, and independent of, the individual.
- Grounding our practices and beliefs in experience, accurate history, and mainstream scientific evidence.
- Focusing on evidence as the primary source of knowledge leading many to an awareness of, and gratitude for, the long evolutionary process that resulted in existence today.
- Aiming interest on this body, this life, and this earth, cherishing each moment, and improving the world for all life on Earth.

The number of pagans in the United States is estimated to be between 750,000 and one million. However, many (like humanists) who consider themselves pagan sometimes also identify with another religion.
But how can I be a PAGAN and a HUMANIST?

What do paganism and humanism have in common? Compare what is said on the websites of two groups representing each:

“Paganism worships creation instead of the Creator.”
—William Cave, author of Primitive Christianity (Published in 1839)

“What really interests me is whether God had any choice in the creation of the world.”
—Albert Einstein

“There is something pagan in me that I cannot shake off. In short, I deny nothing, but doubt everything.”
—Lord Byron

“Not far from the invention of fire must rank the invention of doubt.”
—Thomas Henry Huxley

“We are not evil. We don’t harm or seduce people. We are not dangerous. We are ordinary people like you. We have families, jobs, hopes, and dreams. We are not a cult. This religion is not a joke. We are not what you think we are from looking at TV. We are real. We laugh, we cry. We are serious. We have a sense of humor. You don’t have to be afraid of us. We don’t want to convert you. And please don’t try to convert us. Just give us the same right we give you—to live in peace. We are much more similar to you than you think.”
—Margot Adler, Wiccan priestess

HUMANISTS | PAGANS are naturalists and, therefore, hold that nature itself is thought to be the ultimate reality.

HUMANISTS | PAGANS work to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment.

HUMANISTS | PAGANS uphold the position that the scientific method is the most reliable source of knowledge.

HUMANISTS | PAGANS believe that we alone are responsible for our actions.

HUMANISTS | PAGANS share a “joyous view of life” and are willing to work with friends and allies on issues of common concern. The positions we hold and the actions we take are not for our own benefit but are for the betterment of all of society and the world in which we live.

See more at: www.americanhumanist.org/paths