

HUMANISM All of this leads up to an understanding of why we are Humanist. On one level we are because we have said we are. As the references included in the appendix show, we have been calling ourselves a Humanist movement for some time. Presently there are dozens of groups calling themselves Humanist (most are secular Humanists and some are anti-religious) and Humanism is hard to define because, with all the varied Humanist groups, it is more a perspective than a specific philosophic position.

However, the Encyclopedia Britannica does us a favor by saying, "In recent years the term humanism has often been used to refer to value systems that emphasize the personal worth of each individual but that do not include a belief in God. Modern Humanism, also called Naturalistic Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism and Democratic Humanism is defined by one of its leading proponents, Corliss Lamont, as "a naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion" .

That said, since Adler predates and prepares the way for Religious Humanism, Ethical Humanism can rightfully claim ownership of an understanding of Humanism. It is part of our history and we have been evolving Ethical Culture within Humanism's boundaries. While the humanist perspective is thousands of years old, it is in the Enlightenment that the ideas of reason and freedom became the foundation of a movement that would come to be called Humanism. Twentieth century Humanism began as a religious movement. Enlightenment reason was challenged by the emotionalism of the Romantic Age, and Adler and eventually Religious Humanism are products of Enlightenment values filtered through the Romantic perspective.

My favorite explanation of Humanism comes from Alan Bullock in *The Humanist Tradition in the West*. He explains "As a rough generalization, Western thought has treated humankind and the cosmos in three distinct modes. The first, the supernatural or the transcendental, has focused on God, treating human beings as a part of the Divine creation. A second, the natural or scientific, has focused on Nature and treats humankind as part of the natural order like other organisms. The third, the humanistic, has focused on humankind, and on human experience as the starting point for human beings' knowledge of themselves, of God and of nature."

Although Bullock is talking about the very broad humanist thread through Western literary, artistic, philosophic, political and cultural history, I think his explanation is specific at the same time that it opens the door to a wide range of approaches to the religious center of Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanism. Bullock makes a valuable distinction: rather than an explanation of reality, a philosophy, a life stance, a commitment to science and reason, or a commitment to human fulfillment (although Humanism including Ethical Humanism usually includes all