

My next preliminary step is **RELIGION**. I think it is necessary that we grab hold of our identity as religion. Rather than avoid, we should celebrate, the unique religious identity of Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanism. While many members, especially the more rationalistic ones, have an understandably negative opinion of religion, we function as a religion and it is important that some humanist group grab full ownership of the Religious Humanism title.

Religion, art and philosophy all arose from the human need to say some things are special, significant but religion is only a tool, a human invention. Everything in human culture was invented by human beings to enhance the human experience and religion, like everything else in human culture, was invented to somehow enhance human life. Of course each religion emphasizes some particular need or aspect of human nature but primarily religions function as that part of human culture where the big questions are addressed. While it has been abused by the power system of every culture, religion's legitimate purpose is to provide a conscious world view with an approach to living a good life. If done honestly, it is often in conflict with the standard cultural approach.

Religion institutionalizes the natural desire of human beings to have their lives mean something. Religion says there is a higher way of living, a conscious way, a more intense way. You can give life meaning and you ought to.

Human beings inhabit a cultural reality and will come to think about life in response to the messages they are receiving from their cultural institutions. As one of those institutions – a religious institution – we have the responsibility to offer our best understanding of the path to meaningful living in the contemporary experience. While there are denominations doing a good job of religion, none is offering our unique nontheistic, humanistic, ethical perspective on life.

References, appendix page 3.