

Humanism Glossary

AGNOSTIC - someone who does not know, or believes that it is impossible to know, if a God or gods exist.

ATHEIST - someone who believes that a God or gods do not exist.

CELEBRANT - someone who is involved with creating, writing, and conducting a ceremony.

ETHICAL DECISION - a course of action stemming from a moral choice, that may have no clear right or wrong answer. It will try to take into account all the available evidence and considers all the foreseeable consequences, in order to do the least harm.

EMPATHY - the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.

EMPIRICAL - based on, concerned with or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory, or pure logic.

EVOLUTION - the process by which different kinds of living organism have developed from earlier forms over the history of the planet.

THE GOLDEN RULE - the concept, often appearing throughout the history of ideas, that people should treat each other as they would like to be treated themselves, with the implication being that it is best to treat everyone with tolerance, consideration and compassion in order to have a better society overall.

HUMANISM - an ethical worldview based on scientific understanding and human morality.

HUMANIST - someone who personally identifies with Humanism.

IGNOSTIC - someone who believes that the question of the existence of a God or gods is meaningless because the term "god" has no unambiguous definition.

JUDGEMENT - the formation of an opinion about some fact or idea after critical reflection, on the basis of reasoning and/or experience as appropriate.

NATURAL SELECTION - the process whereby organisms better adapted to their environment tend to survive and produce more offspring. The theory of its action was first fully and popularly expounded by Charles Darwin and it is now regarded as the principle mechanism by which evolution occurs.

NATURALISM: The idea that everything arises from natural properties and causes and discounts all supernatural or spiritual explanations

PASTORAL CARE - an ancient, universal model of emotional and spiritual support, performed by trained individuals supporting people in their pain, grief and anxiety or in their triumphs, joys and victories.

RATIONALISM - the practice or principle of basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than on religious belief or emotional response.

REASON - the power of the mind to think, understand and analyse given information and form judgements logically.

RELATIVISM: The idea that all points of view are subjective and there is no absolute truth

SECULARISM - a principle that proposes a strict separation between the state and religion and also that everyone, regardless of religious background, is equal before the law.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD - a set of principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge and discovery, based upon the recognition and formulation of a problem in a testable fashion, the collection of relevant empirical data, and the testing and re-evaluation of hypotheses based on the experimental data.

SCEPTICISM - the idea that not all ideas should be taken at face value, but instead should be subjected to logical and empirical challenges.