

HUMANISM, ATHEISM: Principles and Practice

Introduction

God has created the human being as a conscious being with the capability to create ideas and things. (shs)

Politicians and social activists who work directly with the masses cherish social peace, justice and national equality, and in the struggle to implement these principles defend unity regardless of their attitude to religion.

Dialogue between adherents to religion and atheists are a means of attaining objectives that are common to all people of goodwill – universal peace.

Man is a friend to man, a comrade and a brother.

Educational work should be directed to helping man find his place in life, and also to instilling in people the desire to dedicate their work directly to society and to people, so that their full and spiritually rich life becomes earthly happiness. This work requires active love for man irreconcilability to the illusions, myths and ideas that prevent him from living a socially meaningful life.

The need to do people good – not to think only of one's own advantage, profit, success, business – does not spring up all by itself. To promote the good of society and man in the name of man and the whole of society, and not for the sake of blessings in the world to come, to make this one's vital necessity, the meaning of one's being and of day-to-day relations, requires tremendous effort and considerable time on the part of society. It requires the emancipation of man's consciousness, its release from delusions and superstitions about society and man in general.

The building of a good society is based on the knowledge of nature, society and man. Irreconcilability to religious ideology as a system of anti-scientific views is also based on the foundation of knowledge. Ideological conviction and firm principles, spiritual wealth and human kindness are the qualities that the true propagandists of such thoughts display in their everyday practical work. This entails the struggle for peace, social progress and prosperity.

The purpose of education is to seek positive solutions to problems exercising the minds, to help people restore their contacts with society, that for some reason or other have been destroyed or are incomplete.

Humanism and Atheism – The present-day Dialogue

The forces interested in the preservation of the social order based on private ownership, seek to halt the dialogue and instill in it the spirit of irreconcilability and cold war.

The social and spiritual development of society is strongly influenced by the emancipation of society from religion.

Detheologization of Religious Conceptions

The emancipation of consciousness, that is of the spiritual life of society from religion, is truly a universal process.

Actually man's cultural development and spiritual life does not consist in ousting religious themes from one's store of knowledge. In other words, the denunciation of religion is not a denunciation of culture.

Atheism is an inseparable part of modern civilization. The believer in atheism is more inclined to look at the ground than at heaven. It is by earthly means that he seeks to settle the problems disturbing him. Even in matters religious and divine common sense, experience and the criteria of modern civilization direct the believer of today.

As a matter of fact, the conception of the divine in the minds of the masses has never been any too clear

The religious attitude of life is disappearing. The significance of the "supernatural" in man's life is fading, and the sphere of influence of religious conceptions and "values" is narrowing down. It is this process that characterizes the dynamics of the change in religion's role in and influence on social endeavours.

The features and principles of the epoch following feudalism were expressed in secular terms and concepts of those times of Rousseau and Hobbes. The emancipation of social thought and ideology from religion reflected the emancipation of social life and consciousness.

Humanism is seen as the law of life and the principle of activity in the name of Man, alive and real. The demands religion makes of him clash with the principles of humaneness.

The grim prospect of an atomic holocaust has enhanced the realization of peace as an absolute value, a good and blessing, and nuclear war – as absolute evil. It has promoted the integration of

efforts of all people who cherish a stable peace on earth, irrespective of race, nationality and religious beliefs.

Social justice and racial and national equality are humanist ideals and universal values. Unity of action is observed by different groups of people, including believers, agnostics and atheists. This dialogue is developing and becoming one of the central issues of today. It is developing along with the growing realization that the concepts of "good" and "evil" have a universal content. In this process humanist aspirations of the masses often come into conflict with conceptions denying the possibility of establishing justice and happiness on earth.

There are forces in the world today, working to create conditions in which man can be happy on earth., without suffering from frustration and spiritual burdens and want of an illusory world. These are the forces able to lead the masses in the struggle for implementation of humanist ideals.

Earthly Humanism in Practice

A humanist ideal draws its strength from man's aspirations. It wants to give man a goal in life, it appeals to his reason, belief in progress and science, and fights his loneliness. It is a tool for delivering mankind from suffering, in the name of its perfection by means of its own strength.

Realistic humanism considers all aspects of man's life and being, and advances a concrete programme for satisfying every man's material and spiritual requirements.

The Church proponents assert that atheism is incompatible with humanism. It counts on the illusion of the adequacy of civilization and religion (the notorious theses of Christian civilization), which has long been spread by the Church.

It is essential that everything should be done so that the problems for the solution of which man addresses God are settled here on earth by earthly means.

Life itself, in its main spheres, carries out enlightening and educational missions. Society helps people find their place in life, reveal their better qualities, talents and gifts and it helps them find happiness and meaning in life here, in this world.

If a man realizes the social signification of his labour it gives him the feeling that his life is full, that he himself is also of value. No wonder then that the man who realizes the meaning of social

activity, the significance of his own efforts in it, does not feel any need of a celestial intermediary in his relations with society or with individuals. He comes to understand that he is the arbiter of social life and the master of his own destiny. He should seek to help people find an answer to their problems in earthly conditions, on the basis of social endeavour.

] Man's alienation from society is not something to be mended by a decree or by force. It is still a matter of the future for society to work out proper ways of settling all problems arising before man in his relations with the social system. Another important thing is to make these relations clear to every individual so that each man becomes an active member of society, able to guide social life.

Without a scientific approach even the most thorough study of only the details of man's relations with society cannot promote understanding of the tendencies in social development.

It goes without saying that the masses will be able to realize their ideas only when they stop looking for a way out in religious consolation and get down to practically reshaping the world, when they abandon divine guidance (as propounded by the religious elite) and turn to earthly powers.

Today religious organizations of all trends have to admit the fact that the (humane) forces that have set themselves the goal of realizing man's spiritual, material and social aspirations on earth are a basic component of the present-day world.

Man does not find himself in a vacuum when the religious influence weakens, when the principles of religious ethics and morals are displaced from his consciousness. Gradually this process makes him seek within the framework of real life a positive answer to the question of the meaning of being.

How the Dialogue is Developing

The religious leaders' hopes are pinned on the reactionary forces in society and on the bourgeois institutions.

Lenin wrote: "Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of paradise on earth is more important to us than the unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven."

In the course of their struggle the working people, naturally, find it necessary to establish the sources and causes of

exploitation in society and they become interested in the Marxist conception of the class struggle. It is also natural that social practice reveals the significance of the institutions on which the existing order is based, including religious organizations and religious ideology.

Marxism will accept no compromise on world outlook, and there can be no compromise between the scientific outlook and belief in a supernatural, divine force.

It is impossible to turn back to a stage the human race has already passed or will inevitably pass. Going back to the former antagonistic class society would be regression.

Whether or not people are religious cannot form a basis on which working people's unity in the struggle against reactionary social forces comes into being. What is of utmost importance is the desire, readiness and ability to participate in the struggle for peace and social progress.

Today it is the expression of protest rather than despair that has become the essence of the masses' spiritual life and practical activities. In substance these activities are associated with the positive goals of realizing the humanist ideals of peace and social and racial justice.

Those who hearken to the People

People had been taught the word of God applied to individual relationships, without questioning the economic and political regime in which men, whom they consider exploiters, may go to church.

The people see that in fact the Church has always preached submission and condemned rebellion, thus contributing to the continuation of exploitation of one class by another.

It is through the class struggle that workers can attain their ends. The elimination of social evil can be attained in the class struggle. "When the worker enters political, cultural or trade union organizations, he can raise his eyes to new horizons... He becomes clear in his ideas and revolts in the name of human dignity. The class struggle is not a theory: life itself creates the struggle.

In our world money is the principal source of rights and authority. Man, his life, is conscience, his very personality becomes victims of the economic system.

Man is exploited by man, one class by another.

The mission of the Church doctrine is to prove that inequality in social and property status is just and eternal, that poverty is blessed. To extol poverty and present it as a blessing is to insult those who are really poor.

Social injustice, inequality in social and property status and the exploitation of one class by another is the evil of the present time.

The struggle against the universal social evil (political struggle included) is contrary to the ideas of goodness and justice and the principles of brotherhood among nations. Class ethics contain universal moral values and instill genuine virtues. Thus, self-sacrifice, real brotherhood and solidarity are tempered in the struggle against social injustice. Participate in the collective struggle in order to become a man.

It is the task of the class struggle to do away with the class struggle itself by way of eliminating its causes. "The working class movement has as its purpose the abolition of the class struggle in the only possible way, through the socialization of the means of production, the elimination of wage workers as a class and of employers as a class."

Through his daily experience in organized struggle, the man who until yesterday was isolated and oppressed as a worker, discovers new relations among men, finds his ideal of a new man, the hope of a better future, all of which give new meaning to his life.

War, social exploitation and national oppression are the absolute moral evil of our times. In the constructive struggle for the prevention of wars and the establishment of social ideals based on equality and justice the masses see universal human ideals and values, and the true meaning of progress.

The people's front is weakened by artificially dividing it according to the principle of religiosity

The triumph of goodness and justice can be brought about in action, in a struggle waged not only by individual humanists but also by the masses.

Atheism: Its Everyday Expression

The Subject of Argument

It is the purpose of life constantly to improve the material conditions and also to strive for self-perfection. Building a life,

permeated with love for people, and strengthening this feeling in every individual gives our life a special meaning.

Life is full of meaning only if it is directed to the service of lofty ideas and goals, when it helps to attain the maximum goodness and justice in all possible magnitude for a given time.

Some want to “serve people without knowing God or denying His existence. In other words, believers do the same things with “God’s help” as atheists do without it.

The peculiarity of the believer’s way of thinking is that as far as his belief in God, his religious feeling is concerned there exists an unshakable certainty, excluding any doubts, any wavering. As for his thoughts and actions in everyday life, they are little different from those of the unbeliever. He too, has doubts and uncertainties and even quests for more practical ways of achieving his ends.

The believer considers that everything good, reasonable and really valuable comes from his faith, from the principles of divine truth, which he follows in his life.

It is true that religious belief is in many cases one of the main factors (sometimes the main factor) of a person’s uprightness. But the facts show that that the connection between a belief in God and ethical behaviour is only relative, that firm religious conviction does not necessarily ensure a person’s high moral standard, and on the contrary, that many people of high morality do not believe in God and, moreover, categorically deny the need of such belief.

It is not a question of God but of ourselves, of our social, spiritual and moral nature, of the real problems of life that exercise our minds and require solution. It is a question of our world outlook and our attitude, which directs our practical activities.

For the sake of what

The “Golden Age” of the domination of religion over the minds and hearts of humanity has gone never to return.

For the believer, God is an unquestionable reality. He worships God because because God in himself is worthy of worship, and also because he believes in God’s power and everyday help. Belief in God is a means and an end in itself. Faith for the believer is everything – both the purpose and meaning of his existence. Everything the believer cherishes and values most in

his life is connected with God – everything comes from God and returns to God.

What about the atheist? For what sake does he deny the existence of God and reject the need of faith?

Atheism as a rejection of the belief in God is not an end in itself. The atheist does not consider denying the existence of God the meaning of his life and it is not this denial that determines the principles of his life. His world outlook, his attitude to life excludes belief in God, and the need of it.

Atheism is a logical result of world social and cultural progress.

Philosophy and Politics

Historically, criticism of religion usually became especially powerful and timely when the revolutionary classes attempted to carry out new social transformations, promising people a bearable existence and a greater hope of happiness.

Both Marx and Lenin considered it humiliating for human dignity to ignore reality and seek consolation in illusions. Man should have enough courage to realize his actual position in life, to enter the battle with reality and conquer it.

Marxist philosophy establishes the genuinely human, earthly nature of social and moral ideals. Engels wrote: "Man must know himself, make himself the measure of all relationships in life; he must appraise them according to his essence, arrange the world in a truly humane manner, meeting the needs of his nature...The truth must not be sought in the nebulous areas of the world beyond...but somewhere much closer, in man's own breast.

Religious philosophy and contemporary metaphysical and dogmatic philosophies leave man at the mercy of external forces and circumstances that are totally alien to him. A man becomes a blind instrument, a means in the hands of other people who have appropriated the monopoly right to be the only infallible interpreter of the world beyond.

Marxist philosophy, centered as it is round man, his happiness, his spiritual being and freedom, has rejected the principle of the divine and natural predestination of history as a form of man's enslavement.

Lenin maintained that the enlightenment and education of masses required patient and tactful work, such as would permit no offending of religious feelings.

Humanism and Creation

Unlike religious belief, atheistic conviction is calm and is justified as long as it serves the good of man.

Only that philosophy is humane which reveals the truth, which tells man of its actual position in the world and shows him practical ways of building his personal and, also, common happiness.

Religious preachers instill in the believers guardedness and distrust in relations with people of a different frame of mind. Religion disunites people, alienates believers in the name of eternity and heavenly salvation. Meanwhile atheists direct all their efforts to uniting people – both believers and unbelievers – for the sake of settling vital problems and in the name of earthly human happiness.

Atheists consider it a task of paramount importance to develop in people an independent and critical pattern of thinking.

The founders of Marxism stated repeatedly that materialistic dialectics should not be regarded as a dogma, but as guidance in creative, independent activity. Marx has advanced its scientific and practical criteria, and above all, the demand of absolute truthfulness, imperative testing and checking of all conceptions by critical thought and experience; not through religious dogmatism and an authoritarian thinking, and by showing their inability to use his brain without external guidance.

Experiment

Doctrines and policies should be judged from the point of view of whether they made people better or worse.

The characteristics according to which people are labeled good or bad are only relative. All conceptions of good and evil are subject to change. Yet there are common practical standards of judgement, which have come down to us through the ages. There

is something lasting, almost unchanging, in the conceptions of ethical behaviour.

The Church has been unable to eradicate evil on earth and has itself brought much wickedness. On the other hand, there have always been and still are millions of people who would have brought ten times more evil had they not been withheld by the fear of God.

Knowledge is consistently and definitely displacing religion. Knowledge enables one honestly to reconsider all the foundations of religious outlook.

Utter helplessness and intellectual bankruptcy distinguish the people who call themselves guides of people's soul.

Personal morality, not connected with the social basis, has ceased to be a measure of appraisal – people judge about life, ethical behaviour and about whether they are good or bad on the basis of their work, their fulfilment of social duty, their concern for social interests.

People's disposition depends on the extent of happiness. If man is pleased with his life, there is no need for him to do bad things; the more beautiful the place, the kinder the people who live there.

There is a connection between inner and external beauty. Man should be surrounded with beauty, he should see and feel it. Then it will help him to live and seek moral perfection.

The people's ethical behaviour depends on their social nature, is determined by their attitude to each other and to society, and is not really a result of being religious or not.

Meditation and the Heart

Now, as I come to the end of my life, I desire only one thing – to understand what man is.

Have complete absence of vanity. Never find faults with anybody, only sometimes make a subtle hint. Don't be too strict - we all make mistakes.

Human cognition is a collective process. We draw our knowledge of the world in the greater part from the models made by our predecessors or contemporaries.

Man will become immortal. Not all of him but his brain, his intellect and probably his feelings.

The desire to have the maximum pleasure and avoid unpleasantness is the main mechanism motivating our actions.

Man must work for others, even if it is unpleasant. So that everyone shall live better.

Modern man cannot live without society these days. The pleasure of social intercourse, not only with his near ones but with strangers as well; the pleasure of activity which evokes a response in other people; these have become necessary for man's peace of mind.

Social programmes inculcated by society give pleasure and help one to bear their troubles.

Through a Thousand Why's

If you want to keep your faith, keep away from the clergy.

People come to the Church with their grief and their needs, their sorrow, anxiety and suffering. The role of the Church is that of providing opium to the people, blunting their striving for the right to a genuinely happy life, free of oppression and exploitation.

Road to Theology

Changing from a "servant of God" into a Man.

The Church disarms man in his just struggle for a better life on earth.

A number of books in the Bible are simply works of ancient Jewish history and literature.

Misfortune and suffering, uncertainty and fear of the forces outside man's control strengthen religion and nourish it. Serious study of dialectical and historical materialism shows that there could be no morality in itself, but that the society forms its ideas of good and evil at each stage of its development. Christian morality, was nothing but a version of morality of the slave-owner society, only embellished and disguised to satisfy certain classes. It has long since been displaced by new standards corresponding to the higher stage of social development which the human race was entering.

Only a complete break with religion could reconcile with one's conscience and give one the right to consider oneself an honest person.

The religion of the ancient Jews, as well as the Christian religion stemming from it, cannot be accepted as divinity inspired and exclusive. It developed under the same laws, went through the same stages as all the other religions of the world; it is related to them and is a natural result of the development of the human race throughout its history.

Any religion which exists now or existed in the past is only a distorted projection 'in heaven' of real relations of human beings with nature and among themselves, a reflection of clashes between classes and of class ideology. It always contains numerous superstitions born of human conscience at preceding stages of development, in the course of the struggle between and replacement of different social and economic formations, in the course of the development of productive forces and the social systems depending on them.

Religion played a positive role at some stages of the development of human society, when it constituted an ideological reflection of the new, more progressive formation that was replacing the old, when it preached and released the ideas of that new and more progressive formation. But what was useful and progressive at one stage could not remain so at the next stage.

All religious institutions are in general organizations which tirelessly proclaim their right to exist because of their former actual and imaginary services.

The serving of religion involves unjustified expenditure of human energy and ability for the sake of the preservation of illusions and distorted ideas about the world and its essence. Thus there is an imperative need to give all your strength and knowledge to real and creative work, even if only a small one.

The right and obligation of every one is to be a human being above all, always and in everything; not to look for props on the side; to feel himself, mingled in the human sea of sparks – the creative flame of human progress.

In the world of men, a man, if he is a man, cannot be indifferent. Here is where the essence and justice of humanism is rooted. Humanism outside man and people is an empty eggshell.