

DECLARATION OF THE CONGRESS WHICH
INAUGURATED THE INTERNATIONAL
HUMANIST AND ETHICAL UNION IN AM-
STERDAM ON AUGUST 26, 1952

This congress is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to the religions which claim to be based on revelation on the one hand and totalitarian systems on the other. The alternative offered as a third way out of the present crisis of civilization is Humanism, which is not a sect, but the outcome of a long tradition that has inspired many of the world's thinkers and creative artists, and given rise to science. Ethical Humanism unites all those who cannot any longer believe the various creeds and are willing to base their convictions on respect for man as a spiritual and moral being. The fundamentals of modern ethical Humanism are as follows:

1. *It is democratic.* It aims at the fullest possible development of every human being. It holds that this is a matter of right. The democratic principle can be applied to all human relationships and is not restricted to methods of government.
2. *It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively.* It advocates a worldwide application of scientific method to problems of human welfare. Humanists believe that the tremendous problems with which mankind is faced in this age of transition can be solved. Science gives the means but science itself does not propose ends.
3. *Humanism is ethical.* It affirms the dignity of man and the right of the individual to the greatest possible freedom of development compatible with the rights of others. There is danger that in seeking to utilize scientific

knowledge in a complex society individual freedom may be threatened by the very impersonal machine that has been created to save it. Ethical Humanism, therefore, rejects totalitarian attempts to perfect the machine in order to obtain immediate gains at the cost of human values.

4. *It insists that personal liberty is an end that must be combined with social responsibility* in order that it shall not be sacrificed to the improvement of material conditions. Without intellectual liberty, fundamental research, on which progress must in the long run depend, would not be possible. Humanism ventures to build a world on the free person responsible to society. On behalf of individual freedom Humanism is undogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. It is thus committed to education free from indoctrination.
5. *It is a way of life, aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment, through the cultivation of ethical and creative living.* It can be a way of life for everyone everywhere if the individual is capable of the response required by the changing social order.

The primary task of Humanism today is to make men aware in the simplest terms of what it can mean to them and what it commits them to. By utilizing in this context, and for purposes of peace, the new power which science has given us, humanists have confidence that the present crisis can be surmounted. Liberated from fear the energies of man will be available for a self-realization to which it is impossible to foresee the limit.

Ethical Humanism is thus a faith that answers the challenge of our times. We call upon men who share this conviction to associate themselves with us.