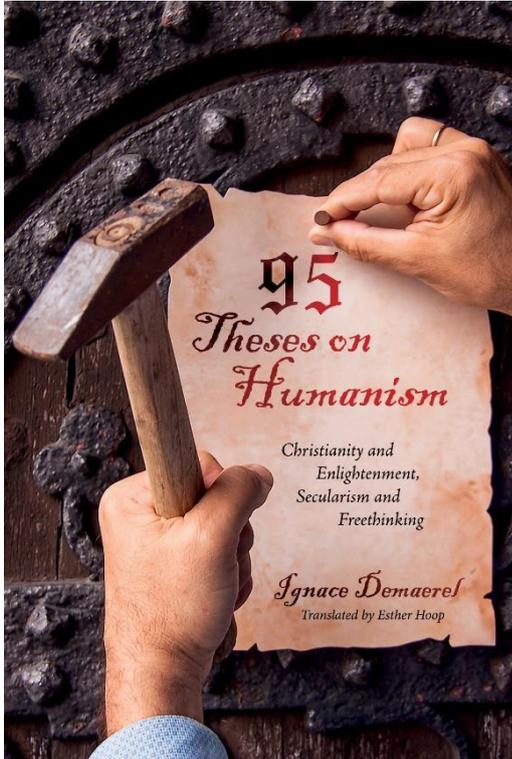


# 95 Theses on Humanism!

by Ignace Demaerel  
Brussels, August 2018

*This pdf-document is like a teaser to give you a taste of the whole book (see below).*



## *Some serious questions:*

*What is humanism?  
What did Erasmus mean by 'humanism'?  
Can you 'believe in man' in the same way as others  
'believe in God'?  
Can man be the center of everything?  
Can man himself be the 'creator' of values and norms?  
Did the Church derail in the Middle Ages because there  
was 'too much God' or too little God?  
What kind of 'light' did the Enlightenment bring? And  
what kind of darkness?  
Is science on the side of atheism and against belief in  
God?  
Is not-believing more rational than believing?  
Is man really an autonomous being?  
If you have less 'God', do you have more 'man'?  
Does faith in a hereafter give less meaning to the here  
and now, or more?  
Does our society, where God is removed from the*

*public space, become more humane?*

*What 'new values' has humanism really brought us? And are they better, higher?*

*Does humanism also have 'dogmas' that are unprovable?*

*Is humanism a full-fledged view of life on equal level with the religions it fights?*

*Is God the greatest threat to human freedom, or is man his own greatest enemy?*

*Does secular humanism really dare to critically question its own foundations?*

The 95 Theses you read here are the 'backbone' of a book with the same title, where they are explained deeper and in a broader context:

**Demaerel Ignace,**  
**'95 Theses on Humanism: Christianity and  
Enlightenment, Secularism and Freethinking',**  
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## The purpose of the book in 120 words:

Since the rise and growth of secularization, the place of God and religion is becoming increasingly problematic in our Western culture. But what is the alternative to its Christian heritage? Humanism puts 'man' at the center of everything, but can you 'believe in man' just as much as you can believe in God? Is this secular worldview really rational, based on science, consistent, and durable? And above all, does our society become more humane because of it? Can you simply obliterate God from our culture and values without these collapsing like a jelly pudding? Secular humanism has always been extremely critical of the church—and in itself that is allowed—but what if we judge and measure it with the same criteria?

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## 1. Introduction

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1517, **Martin Luther** nailed his famous '95 theses against indulgences' to the door of the Church in Wittenberg. These propositions were 95 well-founded arguments against the practice of selling indulgences, which in his time had escalated to the state of out of control. Luther had no idea at the time that this piece of paper would unleash a total revolution and would completely alter the spiritual map of Europe for good. The theses had been birthed in him out of an honest indignation – or even a holy anger. The indulgences were, in his eyes, blatantly wrong practices which conflicted with the Bible as well as with plain common sense. He was a whistle blower *avant la lettre*, and it could be called a miracle that this did not cost him his life.



These '95 theses on humanism' are born out of the same sort of indignation as Luther's. In our **secular culture**, dozens of ideas are propagated and widely accepted without people daring to properly test them. These ideas are invariably repeated and reinforced in the media and in popular speech, as if everyone agrees with them. Yet honest, critical investigation reveals they are no more than pipe dreams. To throw God out of the picture (or put Him in a corner), and to place mankind at the centre of everything leads to inextricable problems, in not one but all areas. Everyone surely sees how this modern era is derailing into nihilism and superficiality. The humanistic principle 'every man determines his own standards' has gone far too far, is contradictory in itself and is in conflict with common sense and with human dignity. Although there is also a measure of anger behind these theses, they are not purely emotional slogans, but well-founded by arguments which anyone is welcome to critically evaluate. And, as was the case with Luther, they are **an invitation to a solid debate** on this subject.

These 95 theses are the framework for **a book of the same title**, which develops them more deeply and places them in a broader context. These propositions are about humanism, not about humanists. Among humanists there are many who mean well and are very sincere. This book does not have the intention of attacking or hurting people. It focuses on the system of thought, the ideology itself, and wants to examine and analyze the ideas and values behind it. 'Humanism' refers here primarily to secular humanism or freethinking.

## 2. What is humanism?

1. For many people the word 'humanism' is synonymous with '**being humane**' (**'philanthropy'**). Humanism however has developed itself into a veritable ideology, which, just like the religions it contests, has become an institution, a system, a power structure and can be equally militant, imperialistic and intolerant.
2. '**Humane**' and '**humanistic**' have the same root but differ as much from each other as 'social' and 'socialist'. Every '-ism' is a disproportionate extrapolation of one principle (or a part thereof). To suggest that only socialists are social is an insult to all other people, and sometimes certain socialist individuals or regimes can exhibit highly antisocial behavior.

### 3. Some history: Erasmus, Renaissance, the Enlightenment, attacks on the Church

3. Humanism as a movement appeals to **Erasmus**, but if Erasmus could see what happens today in institutions named after him, he would turn in his grave. In the 16th century, humanism was a plea for a more humane Christianity; today it is an anti-Christian, anti-religious ideology. Claiming that Erasmus is the father of (modern) humanism is historical falsification.



4. The Age of Enlightenment was characterized by **optimistic rationalism**: a great confidence in the power of the mind, combined with a belief in unlimited progress, whereby mankind would solve all his problems, one by one, without God's help. Although we are now 300 years on and humanity's problems are only increasing, humanists naively continue to profess this 'dogma'.

5. Humanism has voiced much justified criticism of the Church, and this was necessary and liberating for the Church itself. But not all criticism was and is legitimate; it is **historically unfair** to judge the Middle Ages with the standards of centuries later. And it is far too easy to simply blame the Church for all what went wrong in the Middle Ages.

6. Humanism in the 14th to 16th century was a plea for permission to give attention not only to God (theocentrism) but also to man, for example in art and science. Centuries later, this shift of focus from God to man continued to 'slide downwards', and humanism in its current form has an exclusive focus on mankind to the exclusion of God (**anthropocentrism**).



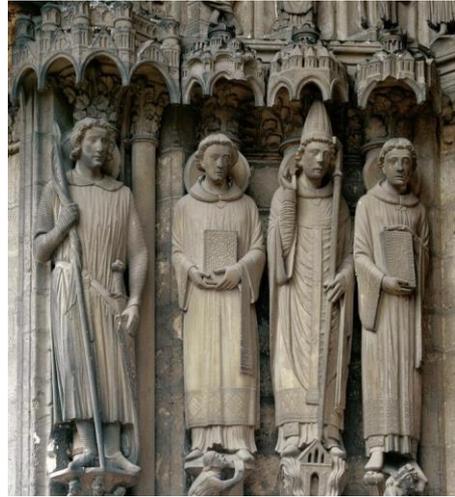
7. Many of the attacks on the Church have their origin in the fact that the Church built too many **side issues around the core** of the Christian faith, and declared them to be sacred, eternal and infallible as well (e.g. devotion to the Saints). Because of this mixture and externalization, she became weaker and her message cloudier, and thus gave much 'cheap ammunition' to her opponents.

8. Humanism is an **unpaid bill of the Church** of the Middle Ages. If the Church had done better at presenting the message of the Gospel and putting it into practice, a humanistic movement would never have been necessary (just as a Protestant Reformation would not have been needed).

9. In its criticism of religion, too often humanism identifies the **Church** with **Christianity** itself, and even with **God** (something which, by the way, the Church herself has also provoked). A person who throws out God and the Church from their life because of the mistakes of an institution or individual believers is like

someone who throws out their television because the responsible minister or a journalist make a flagrant mistake.

10. Humanism points the finger at Christianity as a source of oppression, abuse of power and hypocrisy, but fails to discern that all these **wrongs were committed by people** (and human institutions) who failed to live out God's commandments. The God of the Bible, more than anyone, abhors injustice, exploitation and any type of abuse. This accusation therefore proves the opposite: man is the cause of all religious malpractice, not God or faith.



11. Humanism has (or creates and spreads) a very **narrow understanding of religion**, as if all religion is necessarily restrictive and oppressive, as if religion is just stupidly submitting to irrational dogmas, slavishly nodding, turning off one's brain... It cannot imagine that the Christian faith can be extremely liberating, enriching and joyful. It is never intellectually honest to compare the worst form of the other to the best form of oneself. Humanism first creates a **caricature**, and then professionally deconstructs it, thinking that in this way it has defeated Christianity.

12. The rise of humanism is very understandable as a **reaction against the monopoly and dominance of the Church**, where the Church made herself indispensable, and claimed authority over areas that were not hers (e.g. art and science). And so, what could have been a fruitful, open and mutually enriching ideological dialogue became a bitter and unhealthy **power struggle** which was no longer about substance, but about all kinds of worldly interests surrounding it. The Church has certainly been guilty of fighting a spiritual battle with worldly weapons, but later on, humanism did no less.



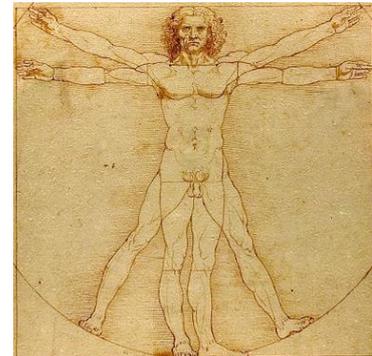
13. **Criticizing the Church** is not difficult to do: the standards of Christianity are so high that no-one on earth is able to live by them. We need to bear in mind that even the best churches and well-meaning Christians are only able to put a small part of the gospel of Jesus into practice.
14. In some respects, the humanists of past centuries applied the Christian values better than the Christians themselves, and as such they acted as a 'wake-up call' for the Church, causing great discomfort and were a catalyst for **many good innovations**. Thanks to their sharp criticism, a lot of abuse of power, superstition, inconsistency, hypocrisy and a mixture of worldly and spiritual power was exposed.
15. Humanism in the 16th century - quite rightly - **opposed the inhuman practices** that were taking place in the Middle Ages in the name of God, but it didn't introduce any new values. It actually reminded the Church of her own values (such as love and tolerance).

16. Humanism, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment turned to **classical (Roman and Greek) antiquity** for inspiration as 'an alternative to the Christian stories', turning a blind eye to its dark, irrational edges. The Christian concept of God and the Bible stories were rejected as naive, unhistorical and irrational, but instead, bizarre myths, contradictory images of God and immoral gods were embraced. The Enlightenment considered the Bible as primitive, but took refuge in even more 'primitive' forms of religion. They preferred 'toy gods' above a real God.
17. The Copernican revolution rightly caused a fundamental shift in the old worldview, stating that the earth revolves around the sun and not vice versa. But in that same period, a **reverse Copernican revolution** took place in the spiritual domain: man placed himself, rather than God, at the centre of the universe. This defies all logic.



#### 4. Humanism as a philosophy/ideology: belief in man, concept of man

18. To the extent that humanism presents itself as a secular **alternative to religion**, as a fully-fledged, all-encompassing explanation that can provide all answers to life's questions which believers seek in religion, it serves as a de facto religious system and exhibits all the corresponding characteristics of such a system.
19. 'Believing in man' is often postulated as an alternative to 'believing in God'. The word 'believing', however, has a completely different meaning in these two statements, just like the word 'love' does in 'I love my wife' and 'I love ice cream'. No one believes that man is almighty, only good, all-knowing, infallible and perfect. This kind of proposition creates **a lot of semantic confusion** and ideological fog in discussions.
20. 'Belief in man' is presented as the distinctly characteristic principle of humanism in contrast to Christianity, but this is a misrepresentation. **The God of the Bible has more faith in man** than we could have ourselves. He thinks very highly of man and still today continues to give him a very high level of trust and freedom. Furthermore, Christians also believe in the original goodness of man (as presented in the Garden of Eden)!
21. Humanism is unable to clearly define what '**believing in man**' exactly means. This leads to the most diverse and contradictory interpretations, whereby in reality, there is no common calibration point whatsoever.
22. The slogan '**man is the measure of all things**' is a misinterpretation of what the Greek philosopher Protagoras meant by it, and as a philosophical principle it is absolutely untenable. This would be the same as all the planets in the cosmos declaring themselves to be the centre of the universe.



23. 'I believe in man' is a beautiful and noble statement at the level of interpersonal relationships, but when you transpose this to the level of an **all-encompassing life-explanation** and make it an absolute calibration point for norms and values, this statement becomes ludicrous. And in daily life, it also turns out to be a **hollow slogan**: humanists have as many locks, alarm systems and security cameras as anyone else.

24. Humanism claims to **believe in man**, yet there is no more volatile and less reliable being on this planet than a human being. The one who is the very cause of all the mess is the least likely to solve those problems! "If the fault is in the system, even the best solution is still part of the problem." If man is the measure of all things, then that is the most stretchable, subjective, self-willed and unpredictable measure that exists, and full of conflicting interests. The human administration of justice is the best illustration of this.



25. Humanism asserts that it has a lot of faith in mankind, and claims **democracy**, for example as one of its most important 'achievements'. The driving force behind democracy, however, is precisely a great mistrust of man, namely the near-certainty that people will abuse an excess of power. Therefore, democracy builds in as many safeguards as possible against misuse of power, to the point that society becomes stuck in a multitude of control mechanisms and bureaucracy, and democracy no longer works.

26. Humanism is usually based on a (the rejection of) a **wrong view of God**. To a large extent, the churches and Christians are responsible for this as they have presented a distorted/half-hearted/mixed image of God. Christians who criticize humanism cannot do so in an honest way without first looking deeply into their own hearts and taking their own responsibility in this.

27. The humanistic concept of man creates a **false contradiction between the afterlife and the here-and-now**. The perspective of life after death does not reduce the value of earthly life, on the contrary, it gives an eternal value to our smallest choices (e.g. to feed a hungry person).



28. To a humanist, Adam and Eve's choice to eat from **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** was a very good choice, even a necessity. People must be independent, self-conscious and autonomous. But if there were a set of scales which could weigh how immeasurably heavy the cost humanity paid for this choice (all the cruelty, pain, sadness, despair...), and how slight the 'advantage', then this choice of 'man' would clearly be the biggest blunder ever!

29. Humanism is **dangerously naive**. Being optimistic about humanity means consciously and systematically closing one's eyes to countless terrible realities. A General who, out of naivety, underestimates the enemy, will send many of his people to their death. Anyone making such an unforgivable mistake would be

summarily dismissed and condemned by history. Anyone who assumes the goodness of man (as a dogma, an axiom) denies the reality of the demonic (for example spiritual blinding, addictions, irrational nationalism and racism, blind rage ...) and so gives it free rein.

## 5. Rationality, science, philosophy, materialism

30. Whoever proclaims science and reason to be the only valid approaches to knowledge will naturally arrive at a **materialistic worldview** and a denial of the existence of a spiritual, higher, invisible world. However, this is a conceptual mistake; if you look through a microscope, you will never see stars or the 'bigger picture'. The type of glasses you wear determine what you do and do not see.



31. Humanism almost automatically results in a **materialistic approach to life** because all happiness needs to be realized during this earthly life and a spiritual dimension is not acknowledged. So, humanism has no 'sensor' to see the limitations and the dangers of materialism, nor can it define it as 'sin' and certainly does not have 'antibodies' for it. Materialism leads to an **impoverishment of every aspect of humanity**: love is reduced to chemical reactions in the brain, friendship and idealism to calculated survival strategy, well-being to welfare and happiness to pleasure.

32. The denial of **the existence of a higher spiritual world** conceals a widespread error of thought. It is true that nothing can be 'proven' in that realm and that there are hundreds of conflicting opinions. However, because of the difficulty in getting to know this dimension, many then conclude that 'therefore,' it does not exist. It is precisely this difficulty which truly reveals our human incompetence in this field, our insensitivity to such subtle matter. The problem is not with that spiritual world, but with our dirty glasses or the calluses on our soul.



33. Humanism creates a **false opposition between faith and science**. 'Faith' is presented as something totally irrational ('to believe in something which science will never be able to prove'), although it stands perfectly as an extension of knowledge and science. Faith is not something bizarre or difficult, but something quite natural. We exhibit it continually in our daily lives (as well as in science!) as we 'trust' an authority or an expert, and this is generally a very 'reasonable' thing to do.

34. The slogan '**We believe in science**' is one of many examples of semantic confusion in this debate. Christians believe in science as well and thank God for it. The difference however is that humanism expects science to deliver answers of an ideological nature (an all-encompassing explanation, including salvation and redemption), and so, it uses science to promote its concept of a god-less society. In this way, science becomes a tool, similar to a ventriloquist's dummy.

35. **Science** is great as a foundation for technological progress, but not as a foundation for philosophy and spirituality, just like glue is very good for sticking two objects together, but not for mending a broken marriage. This is of a totally different order. But since the time of Descartes, the confusion between these two differing levels has been an immovable notion in the western spirit of this age.

36. Many humanists think that **miracles** are contrary to the laws of nature, but for a believer of course that cannot be true. Faith does not go against the laws of nature, but relies on **higher (spiritual) laws**, just like a rocket can escape the force of gravity and take off by a stronger force.

37. In the late Middle Ages, **philosophy** emancipated itself from its 'supporting role' as the handmaiden of theology - understandably and to some extent rightly so - but now it behaves as the boss who despises or ignores theology and faith. This can be understandable as a temporary backlash to restore balance, but those who are still stuck in this view after 500 years have a problem. Most of the history of Western philosophy is permeated with this false contrast between wisdom and religion, while in the Bible (e.g. in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) 'love for wisdom' is in fact highly praised.



38. Humanism appeals to rationality, but often fails to recognize the difference between 'sensible' and 'rational'. **Rationalism and intellectualism** are inherently unbalanced and can be very unhealthy and narrow-minded. They are crippling to creativity and human relationships, harsh, cold and deadly, blinded and arrogant, driven by (subconscious, irrational) fear, self-protection or the need to control. 'Reason' is like a whore (according to Luther): she lets herself be used by anyone who wants her.

39. **Faith** is often presented in a one-sided way as an 'alternative method of knowledge' (e.g. I believe there is a God), but is much more than that: faith is visionary, sees more and further than others do, and from that viewpoint finds the inspiration and perseverance to change the grim reality (think of 'faith heroes' such as Henri Dunant, Father Damian, Mother Teresa...). Faith achieves things, moves mountains, accomplishes the impossible.

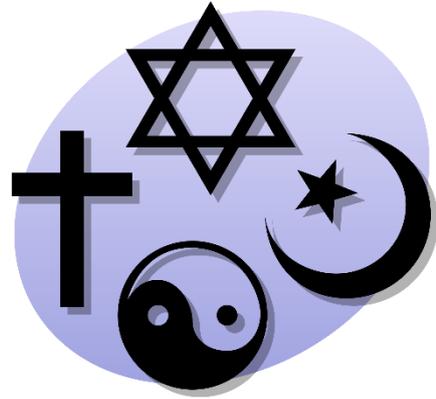


## 6. Humanism: main principles

40. Humanism presents itself as a non-religious **meaning-of-life ideology**, and claims to offer a fully secular alternative to religion. But in practice, it does not give any answers to life's great questions because each individual must personally determine the meaning and purpose of life, and all transcendence is rejected. Consequently, humanism leaves people looking for solutions within themselves in an otherwise empty framework.

41. **Separation between Church and State** can be a sound principle, depending on how one defines it. But militant humanism confuses 'separation of Church and State' with 'separation of faith and politics', and therefore tries to silence believing politicians and citizens. **Secularism** tries to force religion back into the corner of private life and Church, but this shows it has a substantially different definition of 'religion'. For a believer, God is Lord over all areas of life and can never be put in a corner or in a box.

42. The word '**pluralism**' is currently regarded as a beautiful ideal, but many people confuse pluralism with **plurality**. The plurality of many ideologies in our society is a fact, but pluralism is an ideology which believes that this is how it should be: that all religions lead to the same God, that all of them have a part of the truth and that they should all work together or merge into one. Only this is a kind of meta-religious assertion, which in fact is not acknowledged by any religion.



43. The view that **all religions are the same** and ultimately lead to the same goal, would seem to be a 'higher' vision, a lofty and superior insight, but is in fact only one opinion alongside (not above) other ones, which does not even take other views seriously. The creation of a 'universal religion' leads to a kind of man-made 'religious Esperanto', that doesn't enthuse anyone.

44. Humanism proclaims the principle of **free research**, but if it used this principle consistently, it would also need to approve the Nazi experiments of Joseph Mengele. This principle gives scientists a kind of infallible status, as 'the new priests' who are to solve everything without any restrictions on a legal or moral level.

## 7. Humanism: (moral) values

45. Humanism preaches the value of **autonomy and self-determination**: on a philosophical and moral level, it is totally (and fundamentally) **opposed to any authority** and every individual determines his or her own values and standards. But in all other areas of life, common sense recognises the need for clear authority: in a family, football team, business, school, army, political party, government... How contradictory is it then to say that in the most important areas of life someone is free to do whatever he or she wants? It is like a country where everyone is king: this seems 'democratic', free and fun, but leads to complete levelling and utter anarchy.

46. The free-spirited human wants to be **autonomous**. But who in their right mind, wandering through the jungle of life, wants to find their own way without a map, and –out of pride- chooses to reject the guidance of an experienced guide? Life is not a game; it is not without consequences. Mistakes can be fatal, both for oneself and for others. In so many areas of life, people find it self-evident to consult an expert (e.g. for their car, computer, health, finance...) but when it comes to the most important



decisions (i.e. what is the purpose of it all?), we think we know best and **everyone is his own pope.**

47. The humanistic principle of self-determination reveals a very strong distrust of other people, a negative outlook, and therefore little faith. The need to be absolutely free, the urge to not take orders from any authority, is so strong that it is irrational and resembles a **'ideological fear of bonding'**.

48. Humanism's ideal of **unlimited self-realization** constantly and inevitably clashes with its other ideals such as brotherhood and tolerance. It teaches people to focus so much on self that they are not able to realize real, selfless love.

49. Humanism claims to strive for the **'freedom' of man**, and naturally this means that it rebels against any oppression by a religious system. But every religion, ideology, political movement, revolution, therapy, sect... claims to bring freedom, and every system or regime brings with it a certain level of oppression! Freedom is one of the finest ideals on earth, yet so easily becomes a cheap slogan in the mouth of demagogues. And depending on which definition of 'freedom' one uses, people may or may not end up in another (more serious) form of slavery!



50. The highest humanistic virtue is that of **'tolerance'**, but this means both everything and nothing. It is impossible to tolerate everything (pedophilia, child abuse, rape...) because that is the same as culpable negligence. In practice, this principle is therefore applied selectively and arbitrarily. And as both sides in a conflict often accuse one another of intolerance, often the one who shouts first and loudest is perceived as the 'winner'.

51. The humanistic virtue of 'tolerance' sounds very noble and exalted, but there is something **arrogant** about it. Those who 'tolerate' the other opinion indicate that they feel far superior to those who hold that opinion; that in a long-suffering way they tolerate their existence. In their heart, they look down on them, so in practice they don't consider them to be equal at all.

52. Humanism has **not** discovered or introduced **a single new virtue**: its virtues are derived from Christianity, but stripped of any reference to God and deliberately weakened. 'Tolerance', for example, is a very diluted version of the radical, strong 'love' preached by Jesus. Humanism primarily fought for the freedom to *not* have to live the high Christian standards.

53. Taking certain **Christian values** and **separating** them from their **source of inspiration (God)** is like cutting beautiful flowers and putting them in a vase: they will look very pretty and bloom for a while, or even grow, but it is only a matter of time before they wilt and die. Christian principles detached from God Himself are only abstract rules and general wisdom and do not produce life.



54. Humanism rejects every existing **moral authority** and does not put any other in its place: any moral authority is discredited and muzzled as a matter of course. The statement 'each person determines their own values' is like saying: 'There are no common values'. There will be no tolerance for those who elevate their own moral values above those of another. Norms and values have become the great taboo of our time, a 'moral knight' is the biggest insult you can throw at anyone. But the slogan, 'you must not judge me' is also a moral judgment.

## 8. Humanism and atheism

55. Humanism/atheism considers all **religions as potentially dangerous**. But this 'danger' is the flip side of something very positive. Since God deserves the first place in a believer's life, since faith can have such a strong appeal – it can flare up the highest passions, can cause people to rise above themselves – hence, its abuse is also so very destructive. Faith is very personal and intimate (like sexuality), and consequently its abuse is also very devastating (as is the case with sexual abuse)! But who advocates abolishing all sexuality?



56. Humanism/atheism often creates (or upholds) the false perception that 'believing in God' is religion and '**not believing in God' is scientific**. Hopefully it is clear to everyone that both parts of this idea are equally impossible to prove: they are an ideological proposition that science itself cannot make any meaningful statement about.

## 9. Humanism and secularism

57. Humanism advocates an open pluralistic society, but actually **suffocates the debate concerning worldviews** by simultaneously striving for a secular, godless society: any discussion about 'the higher things of life' is seen as irrelevant and unimportant and so is pushed aside. As people almost never talk about their (lack of) faith, this leads to **spiritual illiteracy** and impoverishment: our spiritual vocabulary is noticeably regressing and our spiritual antennas are not being utilised or refined.



58. Humanism often presents itself, consciously or subconsciously, as **a neutral point of view**. In the 19th century – and even still today – it regularly used the so-called 'neutral' state structure as a weapon against the power of the Church. But in the ideological sphere there is no neutrality: you cannot be impartial between good and evil, God and the devil. Whoever does not clearly choose against evil actually gives it free rein.

## 10. Humanism in practice: ideological war and the fruits of it in society

59. If humanism wants to put itself on a par with Christianity as an equal (or better) alternative, it should be assessed with the **same rigorous standards**. Then we would most probably see humanism making all the same mistakes which it criticizes the Church for, simply because those mistakes are caused by people.

60. **Freemasonry** has in many ways been the hidden force behind humanism, but is inconsistent with its own principles: it works in concealment, uses irrational myths, makes (selective) use of the Bible, and exerts strict control over its members (by the costly oaths they must swear). Freemasonry pretends in one of her rituals to lead people to the light, but does everything in the greatest secrecy and in a room without windows! Everything that is hidden is, by definition, in darkness.



61. The errors of the Church (and these should not be minimized) are systematically and disproportionately highlighted by her opponents to muzzle her. The **allergic response** of some atheistic humanists to God, Church and religion is irrational and out of proportion. And in this 'ideological war', the perception is often more important than the content.

62. The hard core of humanists comprises a very small group ( $\pm 1\%$ ). They have, however, managed to acquire a **disproportionately high level of social prominence, power and influence**. In these 'modern' times, not believing is purported to be the 'standard' in public space, because it presents itself -falsely- as 'neutral'.

63. Humanism has become the **new 'State religion'** in secular society: the vacuum created by removing the Church as an authority from the public sphere has been filled by a radical self-determination. There was (and is) a spiritual 'war' about concepts and definitions, frameworks and reference points, and, as is often the case, those who shout the loudest impose their views and push through with them. Under the umbrella of a 'neutral government', humanism has managed to determine the new rules and to (re)define the parameters.

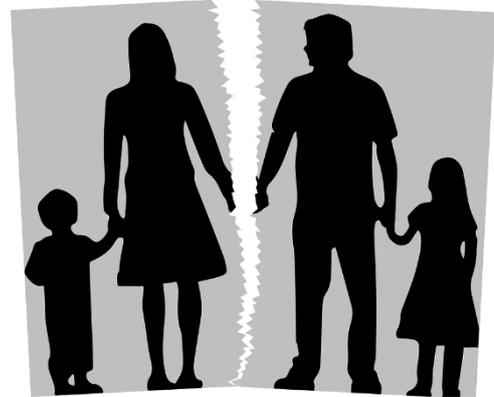
64. Humanism constantly presents religions as the **source of all wars and bloodshed**, but conveniently ignores the fact that this view is no longer consistent with reality: the god-less (atheistic) dictatorships of the last century (e.g. Russia, China, Cambodia, North Korea...) made far more victims than all religious wars put together.



65. Humanism suggests that it is more humane than Christianity but in its 'fruits' we see the reverse: **degradation and devaluation** of man. In the application of its positions (abortion, euthanasia...) the value of human life is systematically decreased instead of increased.

66. The humanistic value of autonomy inevitably leads to **individualism**: it clashes head-on and fundamentally with our deepest human need for a loving and committed relationship. It should not surprise us that marriages and **relationships** today are dramatically falling apart: the emotional price we pay for our sacred self-determination is immeasurable.

67. Humanism has radically changed the perception of **sexuality**, and has brought so-called 'freedom' from the 'suffocating, narrow-minded' **ethic of Christian marriage**. But today, the pendulum has completely swung the other way; the current sexual freedom is more destructive than the earlier sexual taboos were. Faithfulness in marriage is sacrificed on the altar of individual autonomy, and the children are sacrificed on the altar of the absolute self-determination of the two parents.



68. In this era of so-called '**postmodernism**', it is considered 'politically incorrect' to claim to believe in '**the one truth**'. However, in fields of mathematics and science this is regarded as evident; in courts and politics it is sought after. Yet anyone who dares to refer to this with reference to their world view, is called pretentious, narrow-minded and medieval. Even the question of truth itself is perceived as suspicious. It is contradictory, however, to think that 'the truth' exists at lower levels and not at higher ones. The statement "**Everyone has their own truth**" is a cheap 'feel good' slogan and is at the very least contradictory with itself.

69. In secular society, the whole **spiritual dimension of man** is simply **hushed to death**, ignored, suffocated. It is no coincidence that there is an upsurge in nihilism, emptiness and boredom. Humanism claims to create a better, freer and more open society, but the growing discontent in the Western world shows a different picture: escalating suicide rates, a rise in psychological and psychiatric problems (especially young people), anxiety, increasing loneliness, outbursts of senseless violence, etc.



70. For non-believers, faith is like a bubble, like a **fantasized, unreal, make-believe world**. For believers, it is exactly the opposite: it is this current, earthly life (without God) that has little realism and authenticity, but a great deal of pretense, deceit, illusion and camouflage. According to believers, faith in God can set people free from tenuous, earthly, false securities and bring them to the eternal, sustainable sources of life.

## 11. Humanistic Christianity and Christian humanism

71. Humanistic thinking has been **infiltrating Christian churches for centuries**. Each well-intentioned attempt by 'modern' churches to **make the gospel more acceptable** to contemporary man, to lower the threshold, and to take away whatever is offensive, creates more problems in the long run: less credibility and less appeal, more leveling out and watering down of the faith. In short, it results in a kind of emasculated Christianity.



72. Much of **academic theology** is permeated with humanistic thinking: wanting to cut out theology according to the same pattern as other sciences is a fundamental mistake and leads to bad theology and bad science. Academic theology carries the DNA defects of the spirit of this age and infects the whole Church with them. 'God' is not an object of study in the way stones or plants are, and true 'God-knowledge' requires a completely different, spiritual approach.

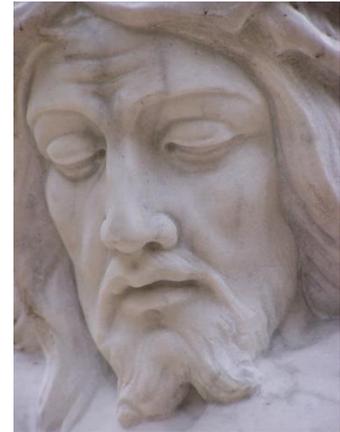
73. When a church becomes stuck in formal rituals and unchangeable traditions, this is also a form of humanism: it prefers to trust in man-made rules and constitutions rather than on God's living presence. It wants to keep everything under its own control and 'play it safe' **leaving no room for the Holy Spirit**. Any Christian community which would perceive God's sovereign intervention would be 'disruptive' shows that it trusts primarily on human endeavours, and actually denies its own reason for existing.



74. Humanism is not always fundamentally opposed to religion, and claims to have respect for '**reasonable' religion**, a practice of religion which fits within humanly acceptable frameworks. But it fails to grasp the essence of true religion: the conviction that, if there is a God, He determines the rules and frameworks, not mankind. Any attempt to create or define a 'reasonable religion' (think of deism, or positivism of the French Revolution) turns out to be an uninspiring flop. It is humanism with a thin Christian veneer.

75. In opening his world-famous Sermon on the Mount with the words 'Blessed are the poor of spirit', Jesus put an extremely powerful bomb under all our humanism, our flagrant self-confidence, our complacency. There is, after all, **a humanist in each of us**. Whoever wants to fight humanism will first need to remove the persistent self-centeredness from their own heart and from the church.

76. No-one has the right to make their **own version of Jesus**: whether a catholic or protestant version, whether an old-fashioned, conservative, or even a 'modern', 'humanistic' or 'liberal' version. A Christian has no right to 'water down' or 'dilute' Jesus' radical and exclusive words. Creating a customized version of Jesus is like buying the 'Lamb of God' painting by the Van Eyck brothers, taking it home and getting out a paintbrush to 'improve' or 'modernize' it.



77. When a church or theological view has the pretension to 'improve' the gospel, then this is indicative of a very misplaced arrogance and it leads to the reverse. People who consider themselves part of the '**humanistic movement within Christianity**' will have to make a clear choice who they put at the center, which Lord they serve: God or man? Do we adapt (downgrade) the Bible to contemporary views, or do we adjust (upgrade) our minds to the God of the Bible?

78. Jesus brought the kingdom of God in a powerful way in both word and deed: **signs and wonders**, healing and casting out of demons are normal elements of the Kingdom. If a church leaves no room for the supernatural, it must examine itself carefully as to whether it is seeking God's kingdom or whether maybe, under the influence of the humanistic spirit of this age, it has swept an essential part of the gospel under the carpet.

79. The so-called 'modern' movements within churches resulted in a **humanistic Christianity**: they tried to run after the world and follow the trends instead of being prophetic forerunners. "Jesus performed a miracle by turning water into wine; modern theology performed a new miracle, and turned it into water again!" This tasteless Christianity was – understandably- spat out in disdain by many. The dramatic decline of the European churches demonstrates that God was not given first place!



## 12. Conclusion and evaluation: humanism vs. Christianity

80. Humanism and laity are **a byproduct of Christianity**, an offshoot, or an illegitimate child, conceived by a 'different father'. The Christian notion of freedom, for example, has become detached from its religious breeding ground, separated from God, who is essentially a Liberator, and even turned against the Church. When such values or '-isms' start to lead a life of their own, they become life-threatening.

81. Humanism advocates '**never submitting to dogmas.**' To believe however that 'only others do this and we don't' shows a lack of self-knowledge or of understanding of the human condition. Humanism has dozens of other unprovable propositions, generally accepted views that are not (allowed to) be called into question or critically examined in depth. It is not even consistent with its own principle of rationalism.

82. The philosophy of humanism is like the man in Jesus' parable who built **his house on the sand**. Ultimately, self-created and gathered values have no holding-capacity as a foundation for life. When storms and crises come, it slips away under one's feet like quicksand. When too much pressure is exerted, it leads to total disintegration. The essence of humanism is 'loose sand', without a bonding agent or a fixed identity.



83. The hard core of humanistic values can never be more than a **lowest common denominator** of all human values, a compromise, a minimalist package about which everyone agrees – in fact virtually nothing, an empty box. A secular alternative to every organized religion is like alcohol-free beer.

84. Putting man at the centre of the universe is not a philosophy that needs to be promoted, but a natural **tendency to self-centeredness** that one should learn to overcome. For a baby, toddler or child, this is a 'normal' approach to life, and all education is targeted precisely at helping children to rise above that. But for a mature adult to exhibit such self-centeredness is a sign of immaturity, a pathetic impertinence which is the very source of all misery on earth.



85. To humanists, as to all people, Jesus' words apply, **'According to your faith will it be done to you'**. Those who do not believe in miracles will not see miracles. Those who do not believe in high moral standards, values and ideals will always see standards slip and the quality of life diminish. Those who do not believe in 'true love' will not encounter it in their life. Those who do not believe in truth will not find it. What a man sows, he shall reap.

86. Humanism as an ideology is an **'easy solution'**: 'If we lower the moral standards, then at least we can keep them'. But even these (lower) morals cannot be attained, and so in the next phase they are lowered even further and the downward spiral becomes unstoppable. Humanism lacks the inner strength to realize its own project.

87. Humanism does not have the **spiritual and moral strength** to hold a society together or to inspire it. Values that have been invented or laid down by a fellow human are never superior to us and cannot be imposed upon us. They can never call people to a higher level, or challenge them to go beyond themselves.

88. Humanism fundamentally arose out of **fear of abuse of religion** - which is understandable – but that should mean that humanists ought to be very happy with a pure expression of religion. In practice, however, humanism fails to overcome this **anti-attitude**, and to many, this has become an irrational aversion, a phobia for every "trace" of religion. If the objection is raised that the deepest motivations for faith are irrational, then the deeper reasons for unbelief are no less so. Fear is, by definition, a bad counsellor.

89. The financial crisis or banking crisis is a powerful parable for the present **ideological crisis**: when derivative financial products are no longer covered by real values, the system collapses. Just like the banking crisis was caused by too much investment with borrowed money and by trading with virtual money, so the whole 'ideological market' staggers. Humanism works purely with 'borrowed values'.



90. Humanism is like **the sorcerer's apprentice**: it has started up a movement and has released certain forces (such as empowerment, individualism, independence, self-fulfillment...) but is unable to restrain these unleashed forces. It is clearly running out of control, and is very dangerous, because these forces have grown into **demonic powers**. And humanism has no weapons to fight against demonic powers, because it denies their very existence.



91. The **torch** is a very striking and eloquent symbol of humanism: a light, self-lit and carried by oneself. But who would prefer to keep the blinds and curtains closed and light a torch while the sun is shining outside?

92. Enlightenment claimed **to bring 'light'** - as humanism and freemasonry also claim, but those who make such a pretentious assertion must prove that they can fulfil it. This claim is not without danger; just like someone who says he can heal someone using psychic abilities, but fails, may end up bringing death rather than healing! The 'light' that the Enlightenment brought only works at the level of science and technology, not at the level of meaning and moral values. Moreover, this pretension is stolen/copied from Jesus: it is a parody of his claim (to be the 'Light of the World'), a poor 'remake'.



93. Humanism thinks it can just **cut God out of society and culture**, without making a difference. As if you can sack the Conductor, and the orchestra will keep playing perfectly; as if traffic continues to flow smoothly when everyone drives by their own rules; as if all train passengers in each railway station could determine where the train will go next.

94. In the case of genetically modified foods, people are genuinely concerned about possible long-term adverse effects, even for the generations to come. But when it comes to **genetically engineered ideologies**, world views and views of man, our society is absolutely unconcerned and thinks that total freedom will



not have any consequences! It is in the most crucial areas that we are naive and irresponsible to the point of absurdity.

95. **Self-centredness** is so ingrained, so resilient, so matter-of-fact and difficult to overcome that only God can liberate us, from the outside, of the tyranny of our ego, of our addiction to ourselves! Only a perfect, good and holy God can be the central calibration point for norms and values, for purpose and meaning. Only He can be an impartial arbitrator between people and between groups, and help us to survey the human maze of life from above.



## Endorsements:

"This book is as bold, direct, and clear in confronting humanism and its effects on the church and Western culture, as was Martin Luther's original 95 Theses that started the Reformation... This book takes you beyond the obvious and provides clarity and real answers to the key issues. It has the potential to not only inform but to transform culture. A highly recommended read for every Christian in the West."

Gary Benjamin, Pastor of Prayer at Gateway Church, Southlake Texas

"In this age when the global community is once again approaching a season of sweeping reforms, Ignace Demaerel has published his *95 Theses on Humanism* to help us reexamine humanism. This is a thought-provoking read that examines the historical origins and various forms of humanism. The reader will also be challenged by the examination of the implications and conclusions of humanism which most in our time have accepted as true but with little examination or testing. It is a helpful and enjoyable read."

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Roger Haydon Mitchell, Political Theologian and Activist, Lancaster University, UK

## About the author



Ignace Demaerel (Brussels, 1961) is fascinated by the tension between thinking and believing, and by the place given to religion in our secular society. He loves to interpret 'faith' for the modern, critically-minded person. He studied philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven, and protestant theology in Brussels. In addition to teaching religion at school, he is a pastor in Brussels. He has written many articles and some brochures, and he has already published four books (on prayer, the person of Jesus, bread and wine, and now on humanism). Since 2012 he is also a columnist / opinion writer for the Flemish magazine Knack.be.

## Previous publications by Ignace Demaerel:

- *'Gebed, diepgeworteld en wijdvertakt. 40 groeischeuten voor gebed en voorbede'* ('Prayer, deeply-rooted and widely branched' - 40 growth shoots for prayer and intercession'), 2009, published by 'Face to Face', Mechelen, 176 p. (ISBN 978 907 4901000)
- *'Jezus 2.0 Wat heeft hij ons vandaag nog te vertellen?'* ('Jesus 2.0 - What does he have to tell us today?'), 2015 published by Davidsfonds, Leuven, 120 p. (ISBN 978 905 9086487)

- *'Wie Mij eet... Er zit meer in brood en wijn - Sleutels naar al onze rijkdommen in Jezus'* ('Whoever eats Me - There is more to bread and wine'), 2017, published by Boekscout, Soest (NL), 188 p. (ISBN: 978 940 2238082).
- *'95 stellingen over het humanisme - Christendom en Verlichting, secularisme en vrijzinnigheid'* ('95 theses on Humanism - Christianity and Enlightenment, secularism and free thinking'), 2017, published by Boekscout, Soest (NL), 232 p. (ISBN 978 940 2239157)
- Columns / articles at [www.knack.be](http://www.knack.be) (website linked to the Flemish weekly magazine Knack) since December 2012

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