

rescued from a giant named Ishbenob, who was killed by a Hebrew soldier named Abishai, son of Zuriiah. Saph was killed by Sebecai the Hushite, Goliath was slain by Elhanan, and the giant with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot was killed by Jonathan, David's nephew. Somehow it seemed important to some editor that David's giant have a name, so he inserted the name "Goliath."

Much later, during the fifth century B.C.E., when the books of Samuel and Kings were being rewritten by the author or authors of what we today call Chronicles, the editors were troubled by the conflicting accounts of who killed Goliath. The David story had already achieved the status of "history," so they altered the record of Elhanan's victory and wrote: "Elhanan, the son of Jair, killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath the Gittite . . ." (1 Chron. 20:5). Once again we are permitted to see how a text could be altered at a later date by the insertion of new materials. By simply adding the phrase "Lahmi the brother of" the Chroniclers were able to adjust the text to protect the reputation of David as Goliath-killer and at the same time eliminate a contradiction.

### Conclusion

In the light of the best analysis of the text we can make at this time, and with what archaeological and historical evidence we have from the past, we can assume that David was a shepherd who became a musician in King Saul's court, that he felled a giant Philistine with a stone from his sling, and that he killed the huge man with the Philistine's own sword by hacking off his head. David did not kill Goliath, Elhanan did. Later editors added the name "Goliath" to the David story.

### Note

Some of the resource materials to support the arguments in this paper should be easily accessible in public libraries, in college and university libraries, and certainly in seminary libraries. See, for example, George B. Caird, "Samuel," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York/Nashville, 1953); Peter Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, 1971); Eugene H. Maly, *The World of David and Solomon* (New Jersey, 1966); items "David" by Jacob M. Myers and "Philistines" by Jonas Greenfield in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*; William F. Stinespring's annotations on Samuel in *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (Revised Standard Version); and Jay A. Wilcoxon's annotations on Samuel in *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha: Oxford Study Edition*. •

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# Humanism in Norway

## Strategies for Growth of the Humanist Movement

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### Levi Fragell

*In the Fall issue of FREE INQUIRY, we published "The Future of Humanism" by Paul Kurtz. Here is another view of the future of the humanist movement. Levi Fragell is the executive director of the Humanist-Ethical Association of Norway (Human-Etisk Forbund i Norge). Under his leadership, its membership has increased from 1,500 to 20,000 in just a few short years. His explanations of how and why are therefore important, especially given the fact that Norway is a small country with a population of only four million. Norway has its own state church, and humanists provide an alternative for those who do not accept it. This article is based on a talk delivered by Mr. Fragell at the 1983 General Assembly of the Humanist-Ethical Association of Norway.—EDS.*

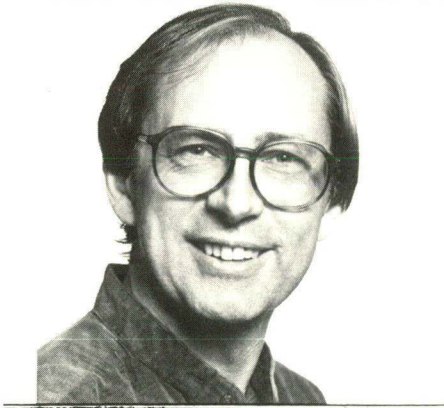
On several occasions, I have discussed the international humanist movement, and in my opinion there are some pertinent reasons for bringing up the subject in a Norwegian humanist-ethical context. I shall mention just two of these reasons:

1. Humanism is introduced nowadays into educational and cultural debates on an international scale. Philosophy textbooks and theological tracts often discuss humanism in a broad perspective, frequently with a great deal of knowledge and competence. This is an area we humanists have considered *our own territory*, one that we have staked out and partly settled. It is important to our identity. If we do not succeed in establishing the orientation of our own ter-

ritory, find the boundary markers, and run up our own pennants, we may risk losing our rights and become mere tenants or lessees of the well-set church state, by whom we may be permitted to grow our own potatoes, graciously protected by the proprietor, but not allowed to compete with or displace the squire's products. In other words, we may freely putter about with an alternative moral education of a quiet-mannered minority, but the Christian basis of education would remain ineradicable.

Bearing a distinctly clear identity as international humanists, we know that the state of things ought to be quite the opposite: World culture—art, science, politics—is no longer religiously founded but is based upon secular and human values. In the future, the *religious* communities should become the ones that in the name of tolerance are permitted to carry out their activities within a joint territory based upon humanist culture.

2. The second reason for discussing the life and activity of the international humanist movement rests implicitly with the following query: If humanism represents the glorious possibilities just mentioned, then why are the world's humanist organizations of such trifling size that (in proportion to the total population) the Norwegian association appears as a Gulliver in the Lilliput of



organized humanism? In other words, what unfortunate errors are being made worldwide that prevent expansion and renewal? How are we to avoid these errors? I shall endeavor to provide a piecemeal answer.

Parenthetically, I admit that the progress of humanist ethics in the world does not depend upon the number of members only. Nor are humanists apt to organize solely on the basis of their *view of life*. Only sporadically and occasionally will that be the case.

The following is a vital point for our self-esteem: We should never be embarrassed because our numbers are so small compared with those of the religious communities. All over the world, organized affiliation with some religious community is motivated by the desire for salvation and eternal life. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand Christians join churches on account of that obligation. On the other hand, among humanists circumstances are quite different: Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand regard it as rather immaterial whether or not they belong to a humanist organization, unless they feel that their membership could be of practical significance for some objective outside their own souls (if I may be permitted to borrow that obscure conception for the sake of parallelism).

Similarly, membership meetings are the problem child of many local groups. They see only a fraction of their members in attendance. This is even more painful because of the knowledge that simultaneously hundreds of thousands of worshipers are gathering for religious services.

To church members, a life of service and congregation activities is the road to salvation. By social company with the sacred one's personal religious life is being realized in preparation for the ultimate target: an eternal joy in heaven. There is no corresponding obligation among humanists. Actually, the question arises as to whether organized meetings are simply the heritage of Christian services and whether we should instead devote our energies to other types of social events, such as study groups, social action, drama, and so on.

Now let us return to the question set forth: Why don't our sister organizations grow proportionally? Why are they so small?

The humanist organizations of the world may be classified in two or three groups. First, the freethinker organizations, which chiefly busy themselves by criticizing religion and, in some countries, demonstrating their concern about the discrimination against nonbelievers. This is the oldest type of humanist organization, having its roots

in the eighteenth-century freethinkers of France, England, Germany, and the United States.

One of the oldest organizations of this type is the National Secular Society of Britain, founded by Charles Bradlaugh, a member of parliament who spent periods of his life in prison because of his beliefs. British workers by the tens of thousands, as well as intellectuals, joined Bradlaugh and his successors. A number of books were published, and pamphlets and brochures were distributed by the millions to mines, public houses, and boarding schools.

To a large extent the English society was de-Christianized during the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. Triumphantly, allied with the great pioneers of natural science, freethinking continued to grow in strength throughout Europe.

What kind of message did those freethinkers bring forth? What did they stand for?

I have secured some of the printed material that was mass-produced at that time. Some of the headings read as follows: "Is the Bible the Word of God?"; "Christianity and Women"; "Violence in the Bible"; "Hell and the Devil." There are sufficient historical reasons for claiming that those topics were essential, that those brochures were necessary, that we today benefit from the criticism of religion at that time. The fact remains, however, that today no British freethinker organization can claim more than a few thousand members.

It is possible to expose the Bible once and create a great commotion; ten times, and cheeks still get red and young eyes sparkle. However, upon the thousandth time, what then? The British freethinker periodical appeared relatively frequently for several generations. Week by week readers learned that Christ did not actually walk on water; nor did he turn water into wine or rise from the dead. At that time, liberal bishops of the English church were saying the same thing.

I do not claim and do not feel that freethinker organizations have had their day. While reactionary Bible waves are constantly rolling toward our coasts, revivals flourishing, immature youths being captured by totalitarian organizations, the freethinker groups do perform an important task. However, field work of this sort more and more tends to become a highly specialized job for people with special qualifications. An increasing number of people feel that the criticism of religion is a field in which they are not equipped to participate.

In my opinion, a mere freethinker organization will never become very popular

in the Western world.

The second main type of international humanist organization operates from an exactly opposite basis. These groups began within the religious communities and have been more interested in what they have in common with religious believers than in the particulars that separate them, and stress the importance of ethics. Those humanists have said goodbye to the Bible and the Christian faith on a scientific and rational basis; but they do not want to "throw out the baby with the bath water," and in their ethical admonitions may very well quote Moses or Jesus Christ.

Within these circles it is not appropriate to express oneself too frequently, too strongly, or too crassly on religious errors and shortcomings. Instead, efforts are concentrated on finding a positive platform that addresses common human problems: poverty, alienation, oppression, war, and exploitation of the third world. Humanism in the United States is characterized by that line of action, and, typically, the latest issue of the *Humanist* is a special edition on the humanization of the educational system. However, none of the American humanist organizations counts more than a few thousand members. Admittedly, there are church communities in the United States based upon humanism, without any god or dogmas, but the great majority of American humanists have not organized. Why?

Because an organization that has nothing else on its program but the furthering of proper subjects will never become the object of priority when disposing of money for membership fees. And, as stated before, it is not necessary to organize to maintain one's humanist view of life.

The West German humanist association, *Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinde*, is a variant of the latter type of organization, counting approximately 28,000 members, and is the largest humanist organization in Europe. Within that organization, militant freethinking is rated low. Its positive significance probably is the fact that general considerations in respect to cultural life are being put ahead of everyday social challenges. However, in this case a second, or perhaps more correctly a *third*, main line has been developed: civil ceremonies are being taken care of to a large extent, primarily civil confirmation and civil funerals.

The Humanist-Ethical Association of Norway is one of the younger humanist organizations within the world movement. Therefore, it is still sufficiently pliable and able to stretch and bend to form new patterns and structures. We can fairly freely take a stand in respect to new challenges;

we can learn from others and improve.

We may address quite openly the question: Which of the two or three lines of the international humanist movement will prove more appropriate in Norway? Which one will attain more support from our members and from those we would like to have associate with us? The answer is: None of them.

If we decide to become primarily a free-thinker organization, emphasizing criticism of Christianity supplemented by topical controversial matters like the current legislation in respect to education, then in the course of about ten years we may once again be able to store our membership cards in a shoebox—we shall hardly be able to afford to do anything else.

If, on the other hand, we make it the main issue to solve the serious problems of humanity and put all our efforts into the task of making our humanist ideals generally known, then Norwegians by the tens of thousands may start reading our books, nod approvingly, and perhaps become nicer people (which is by no means a poor outcome). Our local groups will disappear, however, and our general assembly will be composed of a handful of amateur philosophers.

If we direct all our attention toward developing alternative ceremonies, in a few years we shall have lost our general public appeal and no doubt shall cease to exist as an organization with our last civil funeral.

As of today, the Norwegian humanist organization is by far the largest one in the world, taking into consideration the population, and I am convinced that this is due to the fact that from the very beginning we gave all three of the aforementioned aspects their chance by not giving any of them preference, by considering them equable and equally important. I do not know to what extent these matters were deliberately and thoroughly considered. However, in practice the tasks of our organization have been centered on: (1) Launching a positive humanist philosophy that stresses humanist ethics. We may call it the *view-of-life* line. (2) The development of alternative family ceremonies and festivals—the *tradition* line. (3) Criticism of false and suppressing ideas in respect to view of life and unfair conditions in society—the *freethinker* line. It is a combination of these elements that becomes the base, the walls, and the ceiling of an organization like ours; that is a genuine *alternative* to some of the needs that religions meet at the intellectual, emotional, and social level. It stands to reason that individual humanists may be more or less interested in one or the other of those fields.

It is not a desirable goal to have all

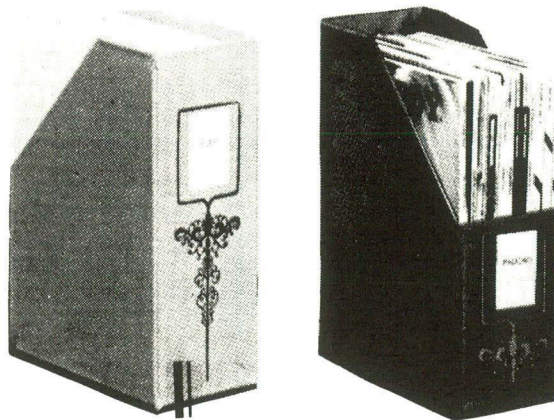
humanists engage equally in everything we stand for. We, on the other hand, should carefully watch for any tendency to downgrade one or the other line. I have met humanists who consider civil confirmation nonsense and who would gladly vote for the total abandonment of that arrangement. Others claim that criticism of religion is none of our business; and there are even among us those who deem it less important to follow the humanist view of life than to fight for abolition of the state church.

To avoid idle confusion about which is the right or the more correct humanist conduct within this spectrum of tastes, I feel the importance of agreeing that the Humanist-Ethical Association of Norway should remain an organization for *everyone* who has joined us on account of one of the main

lines I have sketched. In the name of tolerance, we should also accept as members persons who have followed less well trodden paths, or who define their personal interests in terms other than those I have used. We should never employ the eye-of-the-needle method when evaluating our members. Nor do we want narrow-minded individuals, and we should not qualify anyone for a spiritual heaven. We wish for broad-minded men and women who are courageous and have their own personal views. Instead of heaven, we wish for a society with equal rights for all views of life, a society based on human rights and human worth. Moreover, we wish for a society permitting anyone to call oneself a humanist, no matter whether the distinction between the terms *rational* and *rationalistic* has been clearly grasped. •

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