

and participate in it. Perhaps the Friendship Center movement can provide a wider array of services. But there needs to be strong grass-roots demand for such centers, since the one thing the secular humanists in our society do *not* want is a humanist Vatican telling them what to do.

Secular humanism, in order to grow and expand in the twenty-first century, must deal with these kinds of issues, with the day-to-day problems of just getting by. We need volunteers to serve as counselors in hospitals and other institutions, including colleges, where institutionalized chaplaincies exist; we

need to establish alternatives to theistic support groups that help people through problems ranging from marriage and divorce to coping with the death of loved ones; and we need to provide moral and ethical educational opportunities for children. Moreover, we should send out our message not only through written forms like FREE INQUIRY but through the radio and television. For this kind of expansion, we will have to contribute a lot of time and a lot of money. I think the commitment is worth it. Unfortunately, the decision is not mine alone to make.

More on Eupraxophy

In the previous FREE INQUIRY (Winter 1987/88) we announced a “break with the old humanism” that will ease some of this confusion. Its objective is to give us a precise new tool for thinking and talking about our efforts to create meaning in our lives. We hope that this break will also add desperately needed clarity to the long-running public debate over “humanism.”

Secular humanism is not a religion. But what is it then? Harry Stopes-Roe has suggested the provocative term *life stance*. Or think of it as an outlook on the world, a method for zestful, rational living, a *weltanschauung*. (Picture a fundamentalist mother telling her school-board she doesn't want her children indoctrinated with godless *weltanschauungs!*)

In the interests of exactitude and multilingual usage, Paul Kurtz has coined the term *eupraxophy* to serve as the beginnings of our own “air travel vocabulary.” It is perhaps a strange and harsh-sounding bit of language. Yet we can grow comfortable with eupraxophy soon enough by thinking of it as a more accurate term for what we used to mean by *philosophy of life*—before the linguistic analysts made philosophy a dry and technical enterprise that, whatever its other considerable virtues, no longer speaks to our immediate human need to interpret the world.

Secular humanism is more committed and vital than philosophy, more rational and free-minded than religion. *Eupraxophy* empowers us to define a place apart from both, a place where secular humanism can be anchored. From there, we can advocate secular humanism as a full-bodied approach to balanced living and also yet deal straightforwardly with any confusion between what

we are doing and what most responsible observers would agree constitutes the practice of religion.

What *eupraxophy* lacks in mellifluousness it makes up in meaning. And unless someone else can coin a prettier word very soon, secular humanists ought to start using it. It can fill an urgent need in our vocabularies quite effectively if we only adopt it. As the sloganeer might say, “Eupraxophy. Don't knock it 'till you've tried it.”

—Tom Flynn

We introduced the term eupraxophy (*pronounced yoo-PRAX-uh-fee*) to our readers in the Winter 1987/88 FREE INQUIRY in order to make an emphatic point: Secular humanism is *not* a religion in any manner or form. Our editorial has already stimulated a lot of debate (see our “Letters to the Editor” column). One key point needs to be clarified: FREE INQUIRY certainly does not want to discard the words *secular humanism* and replace them with *eupraxophy*. Rather, we have been frustrated by the way too many humanist have been unable to resist answering the question “What is secular humanism?” with “It's a religion.” With the word *eupraxophy* we can now clearly say what secular humanism is.

Eupraxophy, coined from Greek roots, means “good practice” and “active wisdom.” Secular humanism is based on philosophical, scientific, and ethical inquiry; but it goes beyond any one of these fields of investigation, because it concerns more than simply the results of our inquiry; it focuses on the development of convictions by which we can live, act, and work.

Philosophy, “the love of wisdom,” is for many a purely *intellectual* discipline, one that deals with the neutral analysis of basic concepts. The case is similar for pure science and the study of ethics. Secular humanist eupraxophy, however, consciously combines our best philosophical wisdom, scientific understanding, and ethical inquiry to make concrete recommendations concerning the good life and the just society.

It is important to note that throughout history there have been other eupraxophies: Epicureanism, stoicism, utilitarianism, and some forms of Marxism. And the attempt made by religious humanists and theists to describe them—and secular humanism as well—as *religious* is profoundly mistaken.

As a eupraxophy, secular humanism is distinguished by several characteristics: It rejects today's reigning theistic orthodoxies; it claims that men and women can live well and fully without the fear of eternal judgment; it employs the scientific method to understand nature and to solve human problems; it holds that the cosmos, the Earth, and humanity have developed in an evolutionary way; it defends the individual's right to self-determination; it promotes freedom, tolerance, happiness, and reason; and it is committed to building a democratic society.

—Paul Kurtz

P.S. On Swaggart, the Braggart

So much has been said about Jimmy Swaggart's peccadillos by now that we simply wish to add a postscript to the guffaws that this charade has elicited.

We believe in the right to privacy. Jimmy Swaggart's own sexual predilections—like those of anyone else—should be his own affair, not a matter for public concern. Unfortunately, the loud and boastful Swaggart himself had been given to make everyone else's private morality a public issue. Not only was he among the first to vociferously condemn “sissified preachers” and his fellow evangelist Jim Bakker as a “cancer on the body of Christ,” but he has falsely attributed the alleged decline of morality in America to secular humanism. For years we have been witnessing his weekly television tirades in which he bragged that only born-again Bible-believing Christians could be moral. All others, he preached, were benighted sinners.

What lessons can be drawn from this sordid affair? Many Bible-thumpers have a hypocritical double-standard when it comes to morality and a distorted and repressive view of human sexuality. Indeed, again we

can witness that belief in the Bible is no guarantee of moral decency. Is it not time that we move *beyond* a moralism that is based on primitive absolutistic admonitions? There is another, *humanistic* approach to ethics; one can eat the so-called "forbidden fruit" and still be genuinely moral.—*EDS.*

Bravo!

The Supreme Court refused to hear the final appeal of the seven evangelical Christian families in Tennessee who maintained that their children's religious freedom was violated when they were required to read textbooks that expressed the secular humanist outlook. Among the reading selections objected to were *The Wizard of Oz* and *Rumpelstiltskin*. By refusing to hear the appeal, the Supreme Court allowed the lower appeals court decision to stand. That decision had overturned Federal Judge Thomas G. Hulls's ruling that the children could be excused from classes and learn to read at home. Judge Pierce Lively, of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, however, had argued in overturning Hulls's decision that the readings did *not* violate the Constitution and that there was no evidence that students were being required "to affirm or deny a religious belief." Beverly LaHaye, of Concerned Women for

America, the right-wing group that filed the suit, said that "a dark cloud of religious oppression looms over America's school-houses."

Ingersoll's House

Infidels in all ages have battled for the rights of man, and have at all times been the fearless advocates of liberty and justice.

—*Robert Green Ingersoll*

The campaign to save the birthplace of Robert Ingersoll, spearheaded by CODESH, is moving along smoothly. It is our hope to save the home in Dresden, New York, from collapsing, and to eventually convert it into a freethought library and museum. Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) was a humanist who made no apologies for his unorthodox beliefs; a patriot and politician who refused to run for the governorship of Illinois rather than compromise his nontheistic views in order to court popularity; a leading advocate for the rights of blacks and women; and one of America's greatest orators.

With the assistance of the Robert G.

John H. Buchanan, chairman of People for the American Way, hailed the Supreme Court's action as a victory for "pluralism and diversity in our nation's public schools."

Ingersoll Memorial Committee—which is chaired by Philip Mass and counts Isaac Asimov, Stephen Jay Gould, Adolf Grünbaum, Sidney Hook, and Thomas Szasz among its members—we have raised over \$8,000 in contributions, for which we are profoundly grateful. We need to ask you, too, to help us revive the memory of this great statesman. Send your tax-exempt contribution to:

The Robert G. Ingersoll Memorial Committee
Box 5
Buffalo, NY 14215-0005

Contributors of \$25.00 or more will receive a unique, specially printed parchment copy of Robert Ingersoll's Vow and have their names inscribed in a donor's log that will be permanently placed in the Ingersoll home. Donors of \$500 or more will have their names inscribed on a bronze plaque, which will be hung in the front foyer.

FREE INQUIRY Secular Humanist Groups Listed

Secular Humanist Groups, sponsored by FREE INQUIRY Magazine, are continuing to be formed throughout the country. If you are interested in starting a group in your area, please contact Tim Madigan or Robert Basil, Box 5, Buffalo, NY 14215-0005, (716) 834-2921.

LOS ANGELES, CA
Vicki Martin
6611 Princeton Ave., #530
Moorpark, CA 93021

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Peter DeGrace
1020 Greenwood Blvd. S.W.
Issaquah, WA 98027

CHICAGO, IL
Jim Zaluba/Ralph Blasko
807 Madison St., Suite 103
Oak Park, IL 60302

SYRACUSE, NY
Bert Pooth
Box 59, University St.
Syracuse, NY 13220

BERKELEY, CA
Molleen Matsumura
Box 5313
Berkeley, CA 94705

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Irvin Leibowitz
5009 Arthur St.
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SECULAR SOBRIETY GROUPS
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Box 15781
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FREE INQUIRY will list future groups as they form.