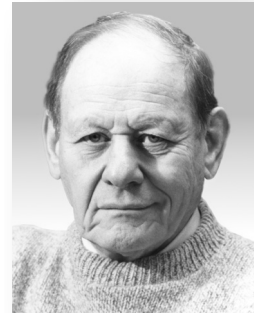


EDITORIAL
PAUL KURTZ



Humanist Manifesto 2000: A Call for a New Planetary Humanism, published in *FREE INQUIRY* (Fall 1999), is unique in that it advocates a new global ethic based on scientific naturalism, not on ancient religious pieties. Humanist Manifesto 2000 emphasizes that we are responsible for our own destiny, and that we can best solve our problems by rational inquiry. It provides a strong defense of human rights. Of special significance is the “Planetary Bill of Rights and Responsibilities”: we have a responsibility to humanity as a whole, to end poverty and disease, and to ensure peace and prosperity for every member of the world community. The Manifesto recommends concrete reforms to achieve these goals: a new planetary income tax, the regulation of global conglomerates, open access to the media, population stability, environmental protection, an effective security system, development of a system of World Law, and a new World Parliament. The Manifesto urges us to rise above parochial ethnic nationalism and divisive multiculturalism and to focus on our commitment to the survival of the human species on the planet. And it invites people of goodwill, representing diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions, to work together in forging a new planetary humanism.



No doubt some of the recommendations of the Manifesto may be considered radical, even utopian, but surely humanism should provide high ethical ideals, which, although difficult to achieve today, are worthy of attainment tomorrow.

Humanist Manifesto 2000 has already received widespread attention throughout the world. The Manifesto (or excerpts from it) have been translated into German, Russian, Norwegian, Arabic, French, Spanish, Telugu, and other languages. The Associated Press did two feature stories about the Manifesto that appeared in the media worldwide, from *El Pais* in Spain to *Le Monde* in France and the Australian Broadcast Radio Network. Religious News Service, the Scripps-Howard News Service, American News Service, the French Press Agency, and other wire services also did stories. Newspapers in the United States as diverse as the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, the *Albany (New York) Times-Union*, and the *Charlotte (North Carolina) Observer*, among others, carried accounts of the Manifesto. The journal *Lingua Franca* (October 1999), in its cover story “Faith No More,” did a highly complimentary article about the work of the Campus Freethought Alliance, the Council for Secular Humanism, and Humanist Manifesto 2000. The *Washington Times* ran a surprisingly favorable story by Larry Witham on the Manifesto.

There were some harsh criticisms: conservative columnist Bill Steigerwald, writing a syndicated story in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, called the Manifesto “a messy ideological goulash . . . of hard-core individualism, fettered capitalism, left-over socialism, dreamy one-worldism and goofy Al Gore environmentalism!” This is in step with Patrick Buchanan’s wish to rescue America “before she disappears into a Godless New World Order.” William McGurn, in an editorial in the right-wing *Wall Street Journal*, bemoaned: “on what scientific grounds do the Nobel Prize-winners who signed the just-published Manifesto 2000 justify its call for population control, a new international tax, and an annual transfer of .7% of the developed world’s GNP to the underdeveloped world?”

The Manifesto speaks not of population control, “but rather of population assistance”—a humanist response to the problems of rapid population growth. And the figure of 0.7% of GNP was agreed to by delegates from 179 countries, including the United States, at the 1994 International Conference of Population and Development. Humanism is an ethical system based on science insofar as science helps us to make informed choices. For that reason so many scientists, including 11 Nobel Prize-winners, have endorsed the Manifesto.

Humanist Manifesto 2000: A Call for a New Planetary Humanism is issued at a time when powerful voices in the United States seem to be retreating to isolationism. Perhaps this is symptomatic of the current distemper that has afflicted this great nation, which is increasingly influenced by

the entrenched forces of religious orthodoxy. The media of communications are often more interested in entertainment than in informed discussions of foreign affairs, and the Congress is overrun by corporate lobbyists with large reservoirs of cash bidding for votes and influencing special-interest legislation. We may ask, What is happening to the open, democratic, fair-minded, experimental American dream and its constructive leadership role in the world?

As humankind enters a new millennium, Humanist Manifesto 2000 proposes that we face the realities of the global information economy that has emerged; this means the development of a new Planetary Ethics and new political institutions to cope with problems on the global level. Unfortunately, the United States seems to be mired in the politics of irrelevance, as a bitter Republican-dominated Senate has refused to ratify the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. All United States administrations since World War II have consistently supported nuclear arms control on a bipartisan basis: the Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963), the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (1968), the Strategic Arms Control Treaties (of the 1970s and 80s), the Unilateral Moratorium on Underground Testing (1992), and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Yet the American Congress, influenced by the Christian Coalition, expresses a Festung Amerika mentality. It refuses to rejoin

UNESCO or pay its dues to the U.N. and other international agencies; it has thwarted agreements on the environment; and it has failed to recognize the authority of the World Court at The Hague. The U.S. foreign-aid bill of \$15.3 billion authorized by the Congress to the developing world is abysmally low in comparison with that provided by other affluent nations. The only thing the United States consistently seems to stand for is free trade—as if that alone will solve the world's problems.

Granted that the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty is not perfect—a time limit might have been appended to the treaty and a call for effective monitoring procedures. But to reject the treaty totally is ill-advised. On the eve of the Senate vote, President Jacques Chirac of France, Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany urged the Senate to ratify the treaty, but to no avail. Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and his allies ignored their pleas. In India, where a Hindu government is opposed to secularism, and Pakistan, where a military takeover has occurred, the dangers of a new nuclear confrontation are as real today as ever. Without a treaty, other rogue states may be encouraged to embark upon a dangerous nuclear arms race.

We need to strive mightily to educate world public opinion and to develop a new planetary consciousness. I am pleased to report that Professor Jean-Claude Pecker, a representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union at UNESCO, recently delivered a major address before its General Conference about Humanist Manifesto 2000. Copies of the Manifesto were distributed to all delegates of UNESCO.

I am also happy to report that the readers of FREE INQUIRY have responded magnificently to our appeal for funds to help complete a new Humanist Centre in Mumbai, India (see FREE INQUIRY, Spring 1999). Our thanks to those who have contributed more than \$50,000. The Swiss foundation, the International Foundation for Population and Development, has agreed to match that amount, so that we have raised over \$100,000 for the M.N. Roy Development Centre. We thank Roy and Diana Brown for their efforts in securing this match. This Centre provides contraceptive aid to the poor women of India and health care for their infants. In our view this effort best exemplifies the ethical responsibilities enunciated in Humanist Manifesto 2000.

May I conclude with a vote of appreciation to the many humanists who contributed to my drafting of Humanist Manifesto 2000: A Call for a New Planetary Humanism.

There had been some discussion in humanist circles for over a decade about the need for a new manifesto appropriate to the twenty-first century and beyond. Indeed, two veteran humanists, Professor Vern Bullough and Gordon Gamm, had been commissioned to write manifestos. Unfortunately, these were never published. Exasperated by the lack of a new statement, I thought that I might try my hand at drafting a Manifesto. Accordingly, last spring I holed myself up in France's Côte d'Azur, where my wife's family resides, and wrote a first draft. Upon my return I solicited volunteers to join an ad hoc "Editorial Committee" to assist in the process.

Of special help on this Committee were Roy and Diana Brown, who are deeply involved in world-population issues and the United Nations and offered valuable suggestions on the sections on the Global Agenda and the Need for New Global Institutions. Similarly, French astronomer Jean-Claude Pecker suggested that we tone down any "American bias." Lewis Vaughn, Tom Flynn, and Matt Cherry, all on the staff of FREE INQUIRY, provided important literary and stylistic recommendations for incorporation into the Manifesto. Ranjit Sandhu, Research Associate at the Center for Inquiry, did the massive job of monitoring the entire project and helping to secure signatures. Others who contributed to this process were professors Joseph Edward Barnhart and Vern L. Bullough, James Haught (editor of the Charlotte Observer), Professor

A New Secular Coalition?

In recent issues of FREE INQUIRY I have recommended that we form a broad new humanist coalition, which would focus on political issues. Our early efforts to form a coalition of humanist, atheist, and freethought organizations have unfortunately floundered. One reason for the hesitancy is that nonprofit organizations are not permitted to support candidates or political parties. Another is that the coalition should be of individuals, not organizations. The Christian Coalition is a coalition of individuals, as are the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Americans United, and other public-advocacy groups. Moreover, a purely humanist coalition may be considered too narrow in its appeal.

After considerable reflection I think it advisable, indeed urgent, to form a new coalition of concerned citizens in the United States and worldwide, and I suggest that we call this a Secular Coalition. This Coalition I hope will be able to enlist a wide range of supporters, from neohumanists, secular humanists, atheists, and agnostics, to liberal religious allies and religious humanists. I hope that this Secular Coalition will focus on a number of core issues: a defense of the strict separation of church and state; a commitment to secular democracy and the

secular state; and a public campaign to uphold the rights of both unbelievers and believers. Given the growth of religious chauvinism today, I believe it vital that there be a strong advocacy of secularism, not only in the United States, where the First Amendment prevails, but throughout the world. Such a coalition would be able to support candidates who wish to defend the secular state. I hope that this new Secular Coalition, quite independent of the Council for Secular Humanism or FREE INQUIRY, can be launched at the beginning of the year 2000, and that it will serve in a modest way as an antidote to the Christian Coalition and other religious lobbies. If you agree with this proposal, please let me know by e-mail (PaulKurtz@aol.com) or by letter (Paul Kurtz, 59 John Glenn Dr., Amherst, NY 14228).

—Paul Kurtz

Valerij Kuvakin (head of the Russian Humanist Society), Professor Svetozar Stojanović (of the University of Belgrade), Norm Allen (director of African-Americans for Humanism), and Jan Loeb Eisler (vice president of the IHEU).

The Manifesto went through several drafts. After a long process, I was able to complete a final draft, which was sent first to the members of the International Academy of Humanism, some 80 of the most distinguished humanists of the world, for endorsement and then other well-known humanists, including many Nobel Laureates.

I was pleasantly surprised, even overwhelmed, by the positive response. Of the 200 or more people who were initially invited to endorse this Manifesto, very few declined to do so, and virtually all who signed it were strongly in favor of its general thrust, though some had minor qualifications about one or more provisions.

We are happy to publish many of their comments below. We also are publishing names of additional signers—including two Nobel Prize-winners and Salman Rushdie—who came in after the magazine was in press. Humanist Manifesto 2000 now has signers from some 35 countries of the world. We need to extend our reach to all corners of the globe. fi

May we invite those readers who agree with the Manifesto to send in their endorsements. (Mailing address: Manifesto, P.O. Box 664, Amherst, NY 14226; email: fivaughn@aol.com.) We wish the Manifesto in time to truly express the universal voice of humankind.

Manifesto 2000 COMMENDATIONS and COMMENTS

Humanist Manifesto 2000 is the finest statement of what is needed for the future of the human race that I have read. Those who have prepared the statement are to be commended.

Paul D. Boyer, Nobel Prize, Chemistry, 1997, U.S.A.

It is depressing that the wealth of the developed world cannot in a better way be shared with the poor countries, but also that even in the wealthy countries poverty is a problem. Why is it that we accept that few have so much and the many so little, and not the other way round? Corruption, greed, selfishness together with poverty lead to criminality and violence. Lack of respect for human rights leads to civil and ethnic wars. Unfortunately these are problems that science has no answer to. Fundamentally it may require the impossible, a change of human nature. But something can be done—there must be education in democracy, political and economic pressure brought by grass-roots movements and also from single persons. In this context, the Manifesto is a very important paper.

Jens C. Skou, Nobel Laureate, Dept. of Biophysics, University of Aarhus, Denmark

I am pretty much with you. Perhaps it is more a socio-political credo than philosophy. The point, a major one, where I have serious difficulty is your unreserved endorsement of a free enterprise economy, with no concern about the increasing cleavage between rich and poor, a very unpleasant and dangerous feature of our society.

Jack Steinberger, Nobel Laureate, European

**Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN),
Switzerland**

The Manifesto excellently—calmly, clearly, soberly—expressed exactly my views on many issues, and it is most cheering to find that here is an organization devoted to fostering these views. You have my wholehearted support.

Daniel Dennett, Professor, Center for Cognitive Studies, Tufts University, U.S.A.

Very well done!

Edward O. Wilson, Museum of, Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, U.S.A.

I fully endorse the aims of this Manifesto. The new century will be the Century of Humanism or it will be nothing.

Roger Maurice Bonnet, Head, European Space Agency, France

I would be pleased to sign your superb document Humanist Manifesto 2000. I hope it receives the international exposure it so richly deserves.

Herb Silverman, Professor of Mathematics, College of Charleston, U.S.A.

I of course support your organization completely as it is the only one that I believe has any hope of bringing sense into an exceedingly disturbing twenty-first century. I would like to communicate directly with your Web site people because the Internet promises to provide, for the first time, the possibility of effectively coordinating the efforts of the large number of highly dispersed people with a common cause. It could catalyze the creation of a truly powerful force for the propagation of humanitarian principles.

Sir H.W. Kroto, Nobel Laureate, Professor, School of Chemistry, Physics and Environmental Science, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Humanist Manifesto 2000 is profoundly enriched with new vision and optimism for the creation of an international environment necessary for the realization of human potential at a planetary scale.

The Manifesto has shown concerns about the environmental pollution generated from present consumption patterns, population growth, and the wrong use of science and technology. Manifesto 2000 should give more exposition to this issue. Humanists should clearly establish that a healthy planetary ecosystem is a pre-requisite for the realization of a planetary humanism, and therefore articulate that human consumption patterns of the resources, population growth, and the technological orientation must remain within the carrying capacity of the planetary ecosystem. It is apparent that it is not Nature but culture that needs to be directed, subdued, and controlled for the survival of Homo sapiens.

There is considerable concern shown in some quarters about the globalization process, particularly in developing countries where the vast majority of human beings live. Globalization, as seen by its critics, is a process of re-colonialization of the developing world's economy by powerful transnational corporations (TNCs). The powerful international financial and trading institutions such as World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) implement the policy instruments (both economic and trade policies) that are designed to ultimately serve the interest of TNCs. The consequences of such globalization is the concentration of world capital and resources in the hands of the TNCs and the greater concentration of miseries and poverty in developing countries that severely constrain human development and the actualization of potential. Since this is going to be a dominant issue in the twenty-first century, the Manifesto should suggest some mechanisms to contain and humanize the operations of TNCs and international financial and trading institutions.

Humanists should exert moral pressure on the world community for the sincere implementation of the commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development.

[Dr. Gopi Upreti, President and Ganga Prasad Subedi, Secretary, Humanist Association of Nepal](#)

There is much that I do not agree with in this document, but I do accept the overall thesis.
[Richard Taylor, Philosopher, U.S.A.](#)

I am in full agreement with the spirit of the document, and I hold its main purpose and outlook to be true. How can any true humanist deny the importance of a commitment to justice and progress on a global scale? I support the movement toward a strong global family, each member benefitting from technological and other advances.

However, as a humanistic theologian, I want to conceive of religious thought and theology in ways that do not make them the sole domain of theists. That is to say, as a humanist, I believe theology can be conceived and done in ways that enhance the humanist vision outlined in the Manifesto. This is certainly what I attempt to do in my work. Except for statements that limit the potential of “religious” thought and “theology” by restricting them to narrow definitions and interests provided by theists, I agree with the spirit of this document and I embrace its call for justice and healthy life options for the global family.

[Anthony B. Pinn, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Coordinator, African American Studies, Macalester College, U.S.A.](#)

Manifesto 2000 is a charter of vision and hope for humanity. Let people everywhere study it, improve its content, and make it an agenda for the twenty-first century.

[Rashmi Mayur, President, Global Futures Network, India](#)

Excellent coverage of humanist, pragmatist, Enlightenment perspective. But insufficient recognition of historical framework, which in its many forms (from inwardness and spirituality to statism) defines the modern paradigm.

[Thelma Z. Lavine, Robinson Professor
George Mason University, U.S.A.](#)

I think Humanist Manifesto 2000 is superb. It contains every noble, radical, doomed, impossible dream I ever supported. Of course, you realize that it will be embraced by just a few, for these reasons:

- The call for world government will affront all “patriots.” (Few U.S. politicians would dare surrender any of America’s precious “sovereignty.”)

- The call for a universal right of birth control and abortion will affront the billion-member Catholic church and fundamentalist/puritan groups worldwide.

- The call for women’s liberation will affront the Muslim world, Orthodox Jews, and many evangelical Americans. Even to espouse democracy puts one in conflict with most Muslim nations.

- The call for gay rights and right-to-die likewise will affront most conservatives.

- The call for limits on multinational corporations may disturb part of the Republican/business world.

Even though many of its goals seem like lost causes today, nobody can predict future cultural tides, and maybe the twenty-first century will bring a shift toward intelligent human cooperation and tolerance.

I don’t think that corporate ownership and advertisers warp the news to any significant degree. (The Gazette accepts cigarette ads, and denounces the tobacco industry furiously.) Public preference largely decides which media are dominant, and which are marginal. People read and hear the messages that

attract them. Every group from the ACLU to the KKK is free to publish its views—and the size of any publication’s audience depends on how many are drawn to it. The Internet has greatly expanded everyone’s right to spread his or her message.

[Jim Haight, Editor, The Charleston Gazette](#)

Strength to your arm!

[Adolf Grünbaum, Andrew Mellon Professor of
Philosophy of Science, University of Pittsburgh,
U.S.A.](#)

Congratulations—well drafted.

[Sir Raymond Firth, University of London, United
Kingdom](#)

I endorse the Humanist Manifesto 2000, with an important reservation. Its ethical provisions are unquestioningly speciesist (see the moral philosophic writings of Peter Singer, who did not coin the term but has been mainly responsible for its promulgation). The Manifesto assumes, without discussion or question, that the only beings worthy of ethical consideration are members of the species *Homo sapiens*. I find this unevolutionary, and have spelled out the argument in my contribution to The Great Ape Project. What if a relict population of *Homo erectus* were discovered tomorrow? Would humanist ethics embrace them as human? Almost certainly the answer is yes. How about *Australopithecus*? Probably. If not, at very least the issue would be vigorously debated and the reasons for exclusion would have to be clearly spelled out.

Then how about chimpanzees, whose brains are approximately the same size as *Australopithecus*; has any thought been given to whether they might count as human for at least some of humanism’s purposes? I suspect that the question has not been seriously considered. And if it be retorted that a newly discovered *Australopithecus* specimen would not count as human for humanistic purposes, we are faced with the question of where, in the lineage, the line would be drawn. Was there a first individual who would have counted as human, born to a couple who would not? This is the kind of dilemma that faces Roman Catholics who insist that, at some point in evolutionary history, God injected an immortal soul. We should outgrow this and recognize that discriminatory lines can themselves be unethical. Especially when we remember racism and slavery.

My argument is open to a shallow *reductio ad absurdum* reply. Where do you draw the line? Are we then to accord human rights to earthworms? To dandelions? But the problem lies with the desire to draw lines, not with the desire to broaden the range of those beings granted humanistic ethical consideration. I think we should give up assuming that there are necessarily lines to be drawn. In evolution—in life, in the real world—there are gradients. Gradients of intelligence, gradients of capacity to suffer, gradients of moral responsibility for suffering. Consideration of children and the mentally deficient has already established the principle that responsibility is a gradient. Why not, then, a gradient of entitlement to humanistic ethical consideration?

If the reason for treating humans humanely is that they can suffer, then let us look at the sliding scale of suffering of which other species are capable. And if that opens up a can of worms within *Homo sapiens*—if, say, some individual people seem to deserve more moral consideration than others—that is something we should face up to too. No doubt it will raise all sorts of difficulties. But they will not obviously be greater than the difficulties we at present face in our humanistic discrimination in favor of one species.

I recognize that these matters are too radical to be dealt with cosmetically in the existing Manifesto.

Accordingly, I sign it, in the hope that humanists will soon turn their attention to the speciesism that is inherent in their ethics and even, perhaps, in their very name.

[Richard Dawkins, Professor, New College, Oxford,
England](#)

Amid the cacophony of doomsayers, it is inspiring that the humanist movement should have the intellectual courage to put such a visionary Manifesto forward. I can think of no more worthwhile program for people of goodwill to devote their lives to realizing.

[Bill Cooke, Lecturer, Manukau Institute of
Technology, School of Arts and Design, New Zealand](#)

I’m now much limited in time and energy due to Post Polio, and am also overwhelmed with many projects. I agree with the overall thrust and positive outlook of the document, and would like to add my personal endorsement to it.

You may be interested to know that St. Martin’s Press is due to publish this month Greetings, Carbon-based Biped!, a collection of my best nonfiction essays over the past 60 years. I deal with many of the issues in your Manifesto in several essays included in it.
[Sir Arthur Clarke, Chancellor, University of
Moratuwa, Sri Lanka; Chancellor, International
Space University, Sri Lanka](#)

Bravo!

[Mario Bunge, Montreal, Quebec, Canada](#)

It is a masterful work of philosophy and reason. I don’t agree with it word for word, but I didn’t write it. Something like this is not written by a committee. A committee wrote the Bible and we know the mess they made of that. Something as far reaching and as clear and well-argued as this document needs to be written by a scholar who knows what he or she is talking about and knows how to express it. Paul Kurtz should be congratulated for his work on this.

[Harley Brown, Alliance of Secular Humanist
Societies, New Jersey, U.S.A.](#)

I have read the Manifesto with great sympathy and admiration for the work of the Editorial Committee. Please mark me an enthusiastic signer.

[Jo Ann Boydston, Distinguished Professor Emeritus,
Southern Illinois University, U.S.A.](#)

Humanist Manifesto 2000 is an inspiring document and I am happy to support it.

[Colin Blakemore, Professor, University Laboratory of
Physiology, United Kingdom](#)

This Manifesto furnishes a beacon in the darkness of our present age and, if followed, could lead to a human resurrection and the birth of a newer and better humanity.

It also forms the basis for a working philosophy for the twenty-first century, and if merged with what Goodenough and others call “religious naturalism” could provide humanity with a newer and better vision of what they hope to attain and become.

The Manifesto provides, perhaps, some tentative answers to the age-old questions: Who are we? Why are we here? What are our lives for? What have we become? and Where should we be going?

Methods and techniques for arranging and obtaining assent and agreement on these goals for mankind must be invented and implemented before we can climb out of the medieval mire and by using this Manifesto as a blueprint, begin to build a social world that is not only superior but one that is truly “fit” for “human” beings. Now that the “call” has been made, what can we do to ensure that it will be answered? This is the challenge before us!

[Robert A. Baker, Professor of Psychology
University of Kentucky, U.S.A.](#)

Congratulations! This Manifesto reflects completely my own ideas, wishes, fears, and hope. I really hope it will find a way in our world of today.

Let's put our shoulders under this project and try to cope with the problems of the world. We humanists have a task to do!

Pieter V. Admiral, M.D., The Netherlands

The Manifesto is overall excellent—the concluding optimism in particular. However, I do not feel that humanist concerns about the free market are adequately expressed. Certainly, the free market is, undoubtedly, the best basis for economic affairs. But it must be constrained, if society and individuals are to get the best out of it. The word supplemented (introductory paragraph) is not good enough, and “may need” is not strong enough. Likewise on p. 17 “Sixth” is inadequate: it recognizes the necessity of regulation, but immediately reduces it. And “Seventh” is seriously inadequate. And elsewhere. The ideal of a “constrained market economy” is very important, and should be properly brought out.

Harry Stopes-Roe, Former President, British Humanist Association, United Kingdom

In philosophy I do defend the is-ought gap. However, we need reason to discover means to ends. As for ultimate ends I (like David Hume) appeal to feelings of benevolence and sympathy.

I defend utilitarian ethics. So ultimately I am not a rights person. Still I would defend certain legal and customary rights. So I am not really unhappy with your rhetoric of rights.

J.J.C. Smart, Emeritus Professor, Australian National University, Australia

The Manifesto is thorough, well documented, stresses both the positive and negative aspect of human societies, and creates a hope for the future. The section on “The Need for New Planetary Institutions” is for me the most important part of the Manifesto.

My reservation and my concern is about the omission to mention and stress the biological basis of human behavior and of human history. It seems to me that the future of humanity depends to a great extent on our understanding human nature which is formed partly by our genome and partly by what we call “culture.” The realization of the risk of massive catastrophes by the population explosion, the disintegration of the environment and wars with means of mass destruction, the perception of the negative aspect of human societies, and our studying human nature might lead up to the design of a new humanism and new global ethics. This might sound utopian but for me it is the only hope for the prevention of massive catastrophes and for the creation of an environment on the planet Earth, supportive of peace and progress for all human beings.

Dennis V. Razis, M.D., President, Delphi Society, Greece

I cannot share your optimism. Born at the beginning of the war 1914–1918, my first memories are of a cousin showing me a hole made through him by a bullet. Then the influenza outbreak. Then after a short interlude the Great Depression. Then there was Hitler, in the best-educated country, and the Second World War. Now with the most phillistine of prime ministers who has done great damage to our universities, which he wants substantially to turn into advanced technical colleges. I am by no means an optimist.

John Arthur Passmore, Professor Emeritus, Australian National University Australia

I wish to add the following matter under the sections on children. Children should be free to opt for any religion or nonreligion when they attain adulthood. Parents should not automatically impose their religion

on children.

Religion is essentially faith-based and as such beyond the understanding of children. Children should be taught about religions in schools but should not be preached to with a view to mend them from birth.

Children should not be treated as the property right of parents. The Convention of Child Rights should be recognized and implemented by parents. (The U.N. Convention of Child Rights was adopted in 1989 and ratified by virtually all nations except the U.S.A. and Somalia).

Child abuse by religions should be vigorously opposed. Circumcision of boys, genital mutilation of girls, the dedicating of children to church services as altar boys and nuns and priests, Lamas (Tibetan Buddhists), Swamis among Hindus, Devadasis and Jogins (servants of Gods among Hindus), compulsory memorization of the Koran's 5,000 suras in Arabic by Muslim children irrespective of nation and literacy, the recruiting of children into wars in the name of holy fights like Jihad (Islamic slogan of Muslims), Dhamayudh (Hindus), and similar atrocities against children should be opposed.

Children should not be labeled under any religion in school registers and censuses. The search for truth and the quest for knowledge should be the basic values encouraged among children. Blind faith and superstitions will hinder their curiosity and their questioning temperament. Through religion, parents and priests are preaching fear among children, which should be avoided under all circumstances.

Innaiah Narisetti, Professor, Chairman, Committees of Child Abuse by Religions, India and U.S.A.

I think that the Manifesto is excellent. I hope that the document will receive all the attention and especially the implementation that it deserves.

There is, however, one point that perhaps could be included or at least explained: as you know, all human beings are born with very undeveloped brains, and the first weeks or months after birth are a crucial period during which sensory reception influences that expression or repression of the genes, the growth of neurons, the number of synaptic connections, their complexity and the establishment of a frame of reference, kept in the limbic system. At this time, the baby possesses basic neurobiological functions, but it does not walk, talk, have coordinated movements, abstract thinking, symbolic language, or other signs of mental activity. The surrounding medium (usually the parents) will provide education, information, experiences, prejudices, and other inputs without knowledge or consent of the infant, shaping in this way its brain, its frame of reference, and its future behavior.

José M. R. Delgado, Professor Emeritus Centro de Estudios Neurobiológicos, Spain

Lucid, logical, clear. A superb job.

Dr. Robert Buckman, President, Humanist Association of Canada, Canada

Humanist Manifesto 2000 eloquently and forcefully states the goals and practical steps to move toward peace on the planet.

Gwen W. Brewer, Emeritus Professor, California State University, U.S.A.

I am not supportive of an international parliament—it is unrealistic. Not enough attention is given to helping those with genetic disabilities and those affected by environmental disasters. Not enough attention is given to removing the stigma from mental illness. Not enough attention is given to the importance of openness in the applications of science and medical treatments. Telling the truth as best one knows it is paramount. Nevertheless I wish to sign the Manifesto.

Lewis Wolpert, Professor of Anatomy, University College London, United Kingdom

Any citizen of any state has the right to apply directly to the International Court or similar organizations in the case of elimination or disturbance of his or her human rights.

Garry I. Abelev, N.N. Blokhin Cancer, Research Center, Russia

In my opinion, the three organized religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are three conglomerate and large businesses, one collecting money on Fridays, one on Saturdays, and one on Sundays.

Parvin Darabi, Author, Activist, U.S.A.

This is an amazingly comprehensive document, breathtakingly sweeping on its reach. Although I myself would have liked a little more said about democracy and dissent, I'm nevertheless quite taken with the whole statement.

One particular caveat regarding the commentary about postmodernism is altogether brief and cavalierly dismissive. It's too widespread a sensibility to brush off with impatient contempt.

Khoren Arisian, Editor, Religious, Humanism, U.S.A.

I agree with all essential points of the Manifesto, especially those stressing the significance of scientific knowledge. I even would say more insistently that the further development of science is the only hope for humankind to survive. I would also suggest publishing a shorter version of the Manifesto.

Yuri Nikolaevich Efremov, Sternberg, Astronomical Institute, MSU, Russia

Humanist Manifesto 2000 is the most comprehensive statement of where we are and what we believe that has ever been presented. But it fails to call for more application of available knowledge: biological knowledge, behavioral knowledge, biocybernetic knowledge of adaptation in three categories, evolutionary, physiological, and cultural. The term Global Ethics is not good enough—Global Bioethics is called for. Global Bioethics calls not for pessimism or optimism but realism.

Van Rensselaer Potter, II, Hilldale Professor of Oncology, Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, U.S.A.

The Manifesto states: “We should see to it that our planetary society does not unleash weapons of mass destruction.” In my opinion, we should be committed to the destruction, and not merely to not unleashing, atomic weapons. Such a commitment will be a great asset to our humanist movement.

V. M. Tarkunde, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court, India

I have never read anything that impressed me as much as your Humanist Manifesto 2000. It's a blueprint for an ideal world we can hope to see during the next millennium. You have made me much more confident that it will happen and much sooner than without your blueprint.

I noted three places where you mention the importance of population control. I regard that as a major problem facing the world today, and I would like to see population control a major goal emphasized by the Council for Secular Humanism.

My own experience with the Church and its true believers has made me less and less sanguine concerning future progress for humanism. It has even affected my desire to look forward to my own future birthdays. Your Manifesto 2000 has helped improve my attitude in that area.

Although you and I won't be here to see the continuing evolution of global humanism, at least your blueprint will light the way.

Walter C. McCrone, Ph.D., McCrone, Research

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(Commendations and Comments
cont'd. from p. 9)

Institute, U.S.A.

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A Call for a New
Planetary Humanism

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