

## Humanism: KS2-3

Luke Donnellan  
Director of Understanding Humanism  
@HumanismEdu



# CREative and REinspiring Annual RE Conference 2022

An inspiring day of RE CPD  
**'CREative and REinspiring RE Conference'**  
in conjunction with  
Wiltshire, Dorset and BCP SACRES



**S.A.C.R.E**  
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#ReReRE2022



# WHAT IS HUMANISM?



# HUMANISM IN 5 THEMES

- 1) **The human being** (natural, potential)
- 1) **Understanding the world** (reason, science, atheism)
- 1) **The one life** (agency, happiness, freedom)
- 1) **Humanist ethics** (empathy, consequences, golden rule)
- 1) **Society: goals and action** (responsibility, human rights, secularism)





HERE WE

ARE

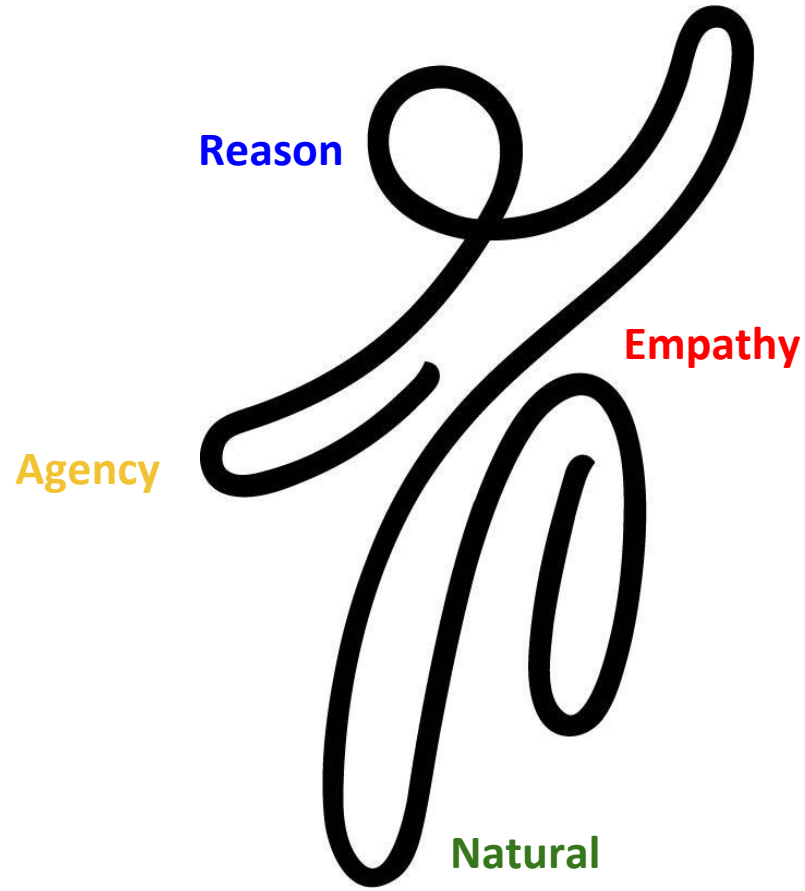
NOTES FOR LIVING  
ON PLANET EARTH

OLIVER JEFFERS





# HUMANISM



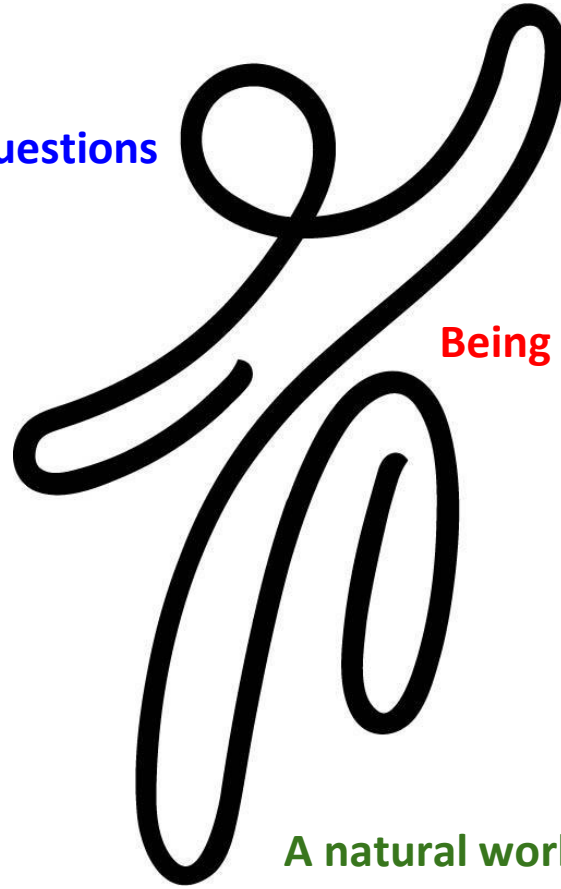
# HUMANISM

Asking questions

Finding happiness

Being kind

A natural world





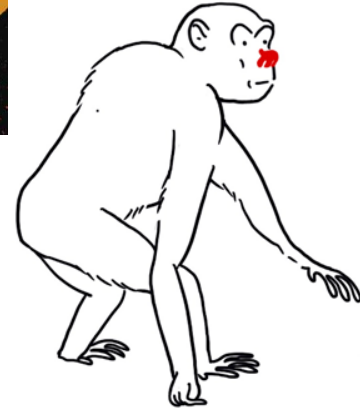
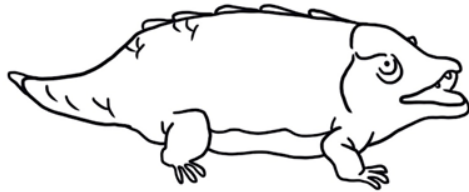
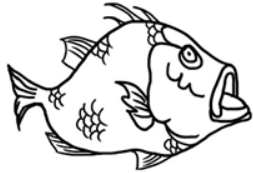
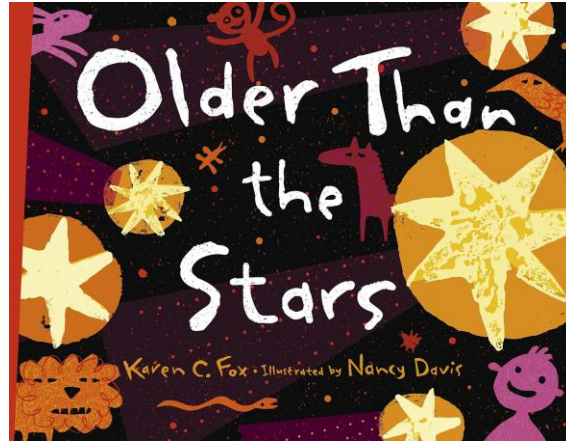
# Alice Roberts, biologist

'We are part of this **natural universe** and this natural world. We are part of the **story of life** on this planet. We can feel a real sense of belonging and connectedness in this story, and also a **humility** in the face of all the contingencies and chances that led to the survival of our species.'

'We, as humans, have the power to make good choices, to lead a good life, to **create a better society** – and look after our planet, too. Humanists think that hope for a better future lies with the **choices** we make, and that our own **human capacities** for reason, love and empathy and moral sense can make us better people.'



# HUMAN ORIGINS



# HUMAN BEINGS



‘Our entire bodies and brains are made of a few dollars’ worth of common elements: oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, enough calcium to whitewash a chicken coop, sufficient iron to make a two-inch nail, phosphorous to tip a good number of matches, enough sulphur to dust a flea-plagued dog, together with modest amounts of potassium, chlorine, magnesium and sodium. Assemble them all in the right proportion, build the whole into an intricate interacting system, and the result is our feeling, thinking, striving, imagining, creative selves. **Such ordinary elements; such extraordinary results!**’

James Hemming (1909 – 2007), child psychologist and former President of Humanists UK



# The human being

## The two wolves

Humans: good and bad



# The world is a natural place



# Understanding the world

## Scepticism

Asking **questions**

Making **mistakes**

Looking for **evidence**

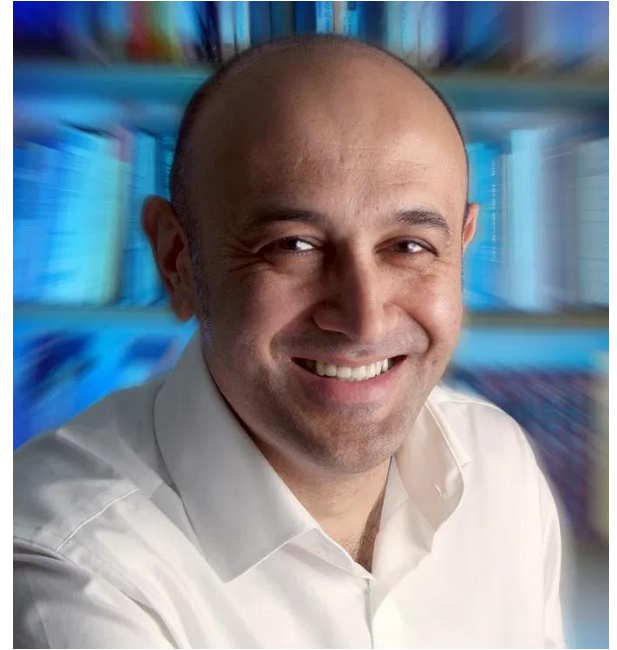
## Science



# Jim al-Khalili, physicist

‘**Learning** about the nature of space and time or the structure of atoms fills me with awe and **wonder**. It makes me want to learn more.’

‘We also need to convey the importance of **rational** thinking, the way we do **science**, the way we gather **evidence**. If I have a belief or an opinion or view or hypothesis, I need to test it, and if I discover that that isn’t the way things are, that that isn’t the truth, I need to be prepared to give it up. I need to be prepared to change my mind and I think that’s a lesson that increasingly I feel is important to spread to wider society.’





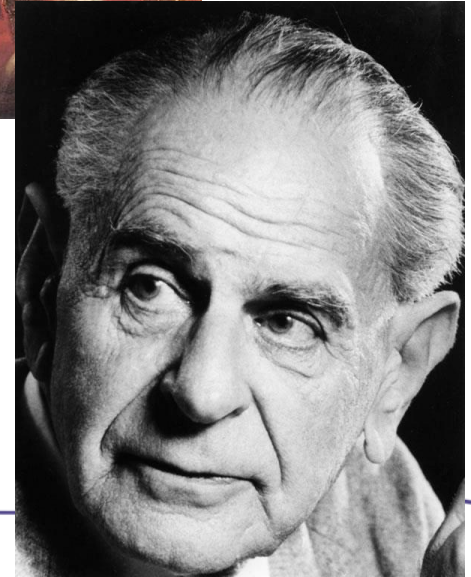
‘A wise man proportions his belief to the **evidence.**’

David Hume



‘**Science** is one of the very few human activities — perhaps the only one — in which errors are systematically criticized and fairly often, in time, corrected. This is why we can say that, in science, we often learn from our mistakes, and why we can speak clearly and sensibly about making **progress** there.’

Karl Popper





# THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES



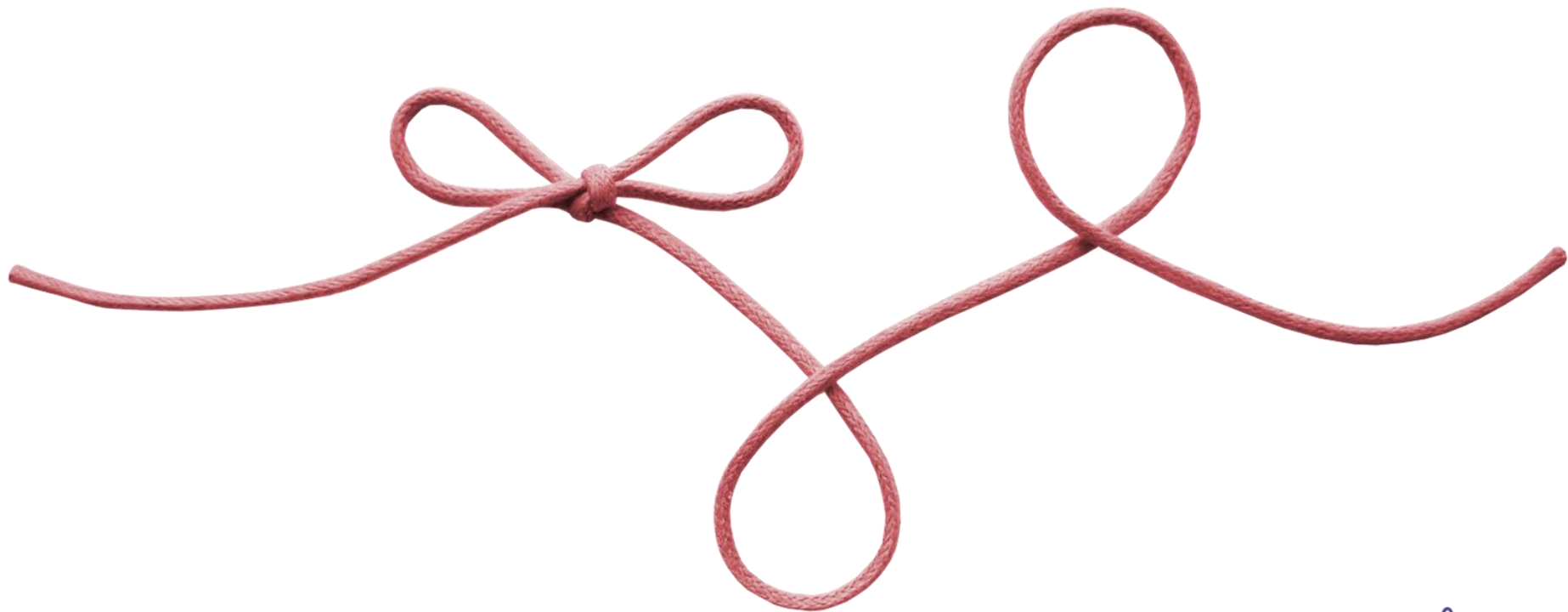
# ATHEISM AND AGNOSTICISM

**Atheism** = don't believe in a god or gods

**Agnosticism** = believe we cannot know if a god or gods exist



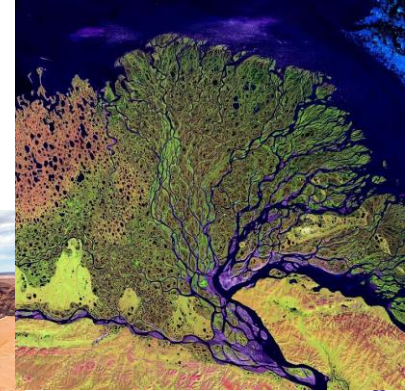
# THE ONE LIFE



# THE RIVER OF LIFE

**‘An individual human existence should be like a river – small at first, narrowly contained within its banks, and rushing passionately past boulders and over waterfalls. Gradually the river grows wider, the banks recede, the waters flow more quietly, and – in the end – without any visible break, they become merged in the sea, and painlessly lose their individual being. The man or woman who in old age, can see his or her life in this way, will not suffer from the fear of death, since the things they care for will continue.’**

**Bertrand Russell**



# HUMANIST FUNERAL EXTRACTS

- 1) A humanist ceremony is an opportunity to join in taking leave of someone we have loved... but it is more than that. It is a celebration of the life and personality that have been.
- 2) We know that the value and the meaning in life consist in living it – and living it well. People who have been a strength and comfort to others and have worked for future generations, deriving fulfillment and satisfaction from so doing, these are the people who create the value and meaning in life.
- 3) All that has life has its beginning and its end. Life exists in the time span between birth and death and, for those of us who believe that death brings the end of individual existence, life's significance lies in the experiences and satisfactions we achieve in that span of time.
- 4) The comfort of having a friend may indeed be lost, but the comfort of having had that friend is never lost. To match the grief in losing him you have the joy of having known him.
- 5) For those of us who believe that death brings the end of individual existence, recognition of our responsibility for, and dependence on, each other gives life a purpose and significance.
- 6) No life is ever completely lost: we live on through the influence we have had on the lives of those who remain.
- 7) What matters is not that someone has died, but that they have lived. Let us concentrate today on the delight and wonder of their lives.
- 8) His body we commit to its natural end, its transformation into the ultimate elements of the universe.
- 9) We have been remembering with love and with gratitude a life that has ended. Let us now return to our homes and our work, resolved that we who live on will use our lives more fully and to better purpose for having known her and for having shared in her life.
- 10) We have been remembering and reminding ourselves that the dead reside not in the grave, but in the hearts and minds of the living.



# THE HAPPY HUMAN

'Happiness is the only good.  
The place to be happy is **here**.  
The time to be happy is **now**.  
The way to be happy is to **make others so**.'

Robert Ingersoll (1833 – 1899)



# Frank Turner, musician

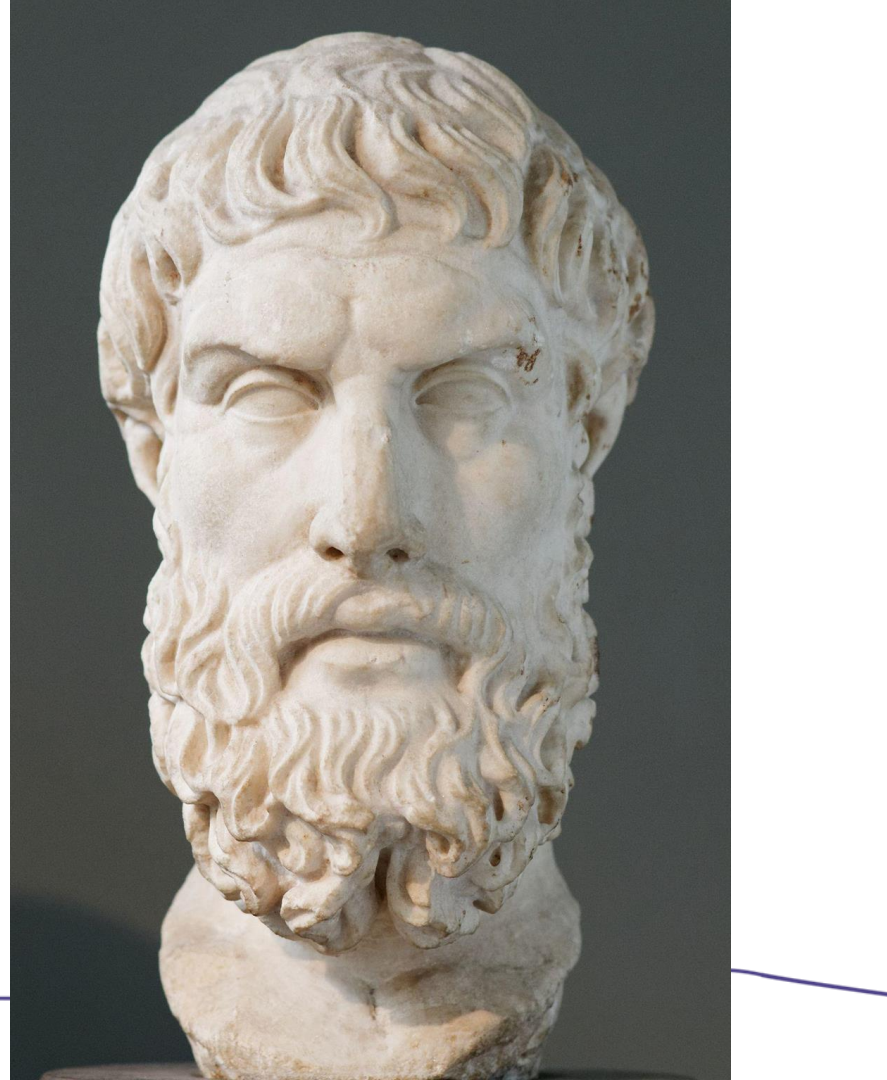
'As a humanist, I think there's no inherent meaning to the universe. Existence is a happenstance. But that's not the end of that statement or that conversation. We can **create meaning** and order and structure and **beauty** and art... It's a declaration of **autonomy**. If we want to have beauty and structure and meaning in our lives then we have to provide it.'

'Art is primarily about **empathy**.... Music is about **community** and communing. Partly, that's just that moment when you hear a song and you feel like you've connected with the person who wrote it and the feelings they were having, but it's also a moment of social and communal gathering. It's a feeling of dissolving into a great mass. It's a feeling of **connection** with strangers. The most powerful moment in art for me is that moment when just you get a glimmer of the feeling that you're not alone.'



‘Of all the means to insure  
**happiness** throughout the whole  
life, by far the most important is  
the acquisition of **friends**.’

**Epicurus**





# Humanist ceremonies (namings, weddings, funerals)

Freedom

Love



Support

Connections



Responsibility

Equality



# BEING GOOD

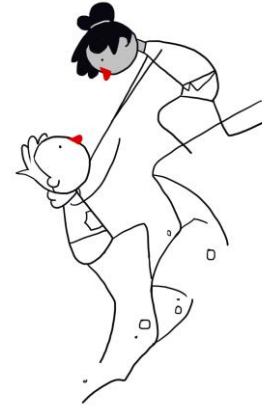
‘Why should I consider others?... Myself, I think the only possible answer is the humanist one – because we are naturally **social beings**; we live in **communities**; and life in any community, from the family outwards, is much happier, and fuller, and richer if the members are friendly and co-operative than if they are hostile and resentful.’

**Margaret Knight, humanist and psychologist (1903 – 1983)**

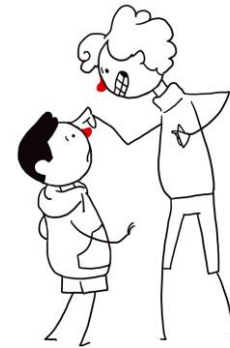


# The Golden Rule

**‘Treat other people as you'd want to be treated in their situation.’**



**‘Do not treat others in a way you would not like to be treated yourself.’**



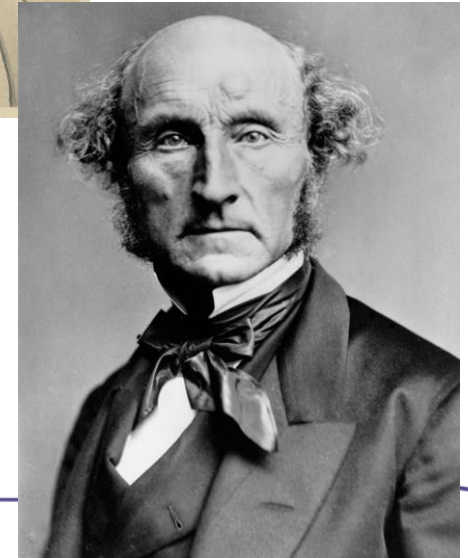
'All humans have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others... When someone sees a child about to fall into a well, they will all experience a feeling of alarm and distress... to be without this **compassion** is not human.'

Meng Tzu



'Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote **happiness**; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain.'

John Stuart Mill



# Natalie Haynes, author

'**Imagining** yourself on the receiving end of your own behaviour is a good way to decide whether you're doing what you think is right or wrong.'

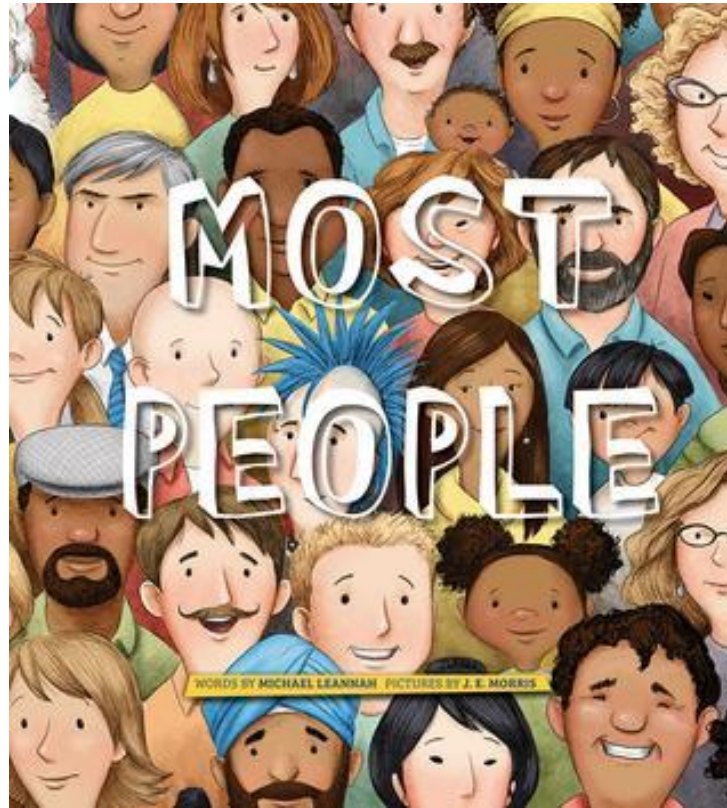
'It doesn't matter if you can't **make a difference** on a global level. Most of us won't find the cure to a disease or discover clean energy. But even on the smallest scale, you can make the people around you feel happier because you're there.'

'I think **stories** probably have the power to tell us everything about the human condition... we learn to understand ourselves and each other... If you spend your life jumping from inside your world to inside somebody else's, I think you probably will be more **empathetic**.'





# BEING GOOD



# WHAT WOULD YOU DO... AND WHY?

You are in a sweet shop with some friends.  
The owner of the shop is not looking. One of  
your friends wants to steal some sweets.

**How could you persuade them not to?**



# ANIMAL WELFARE

‘The question is not can they reason nor can they talk, but rather **can they suffer?**’

**Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), philosopher**

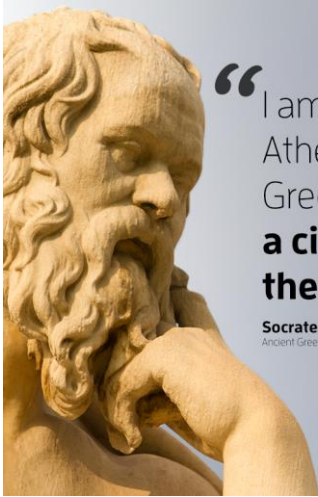
‘The only justifiable stopping place for the expansion of altruism is the point at which all whose welfare can be affected by our actions are included in the circle of altruism. This means that **all beings that can feel pleasure and pain should be included.**’

**Peter Singer, humanist philosopher**



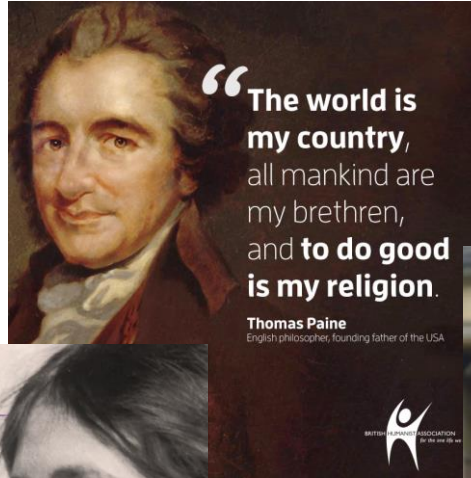


# HUMAN SOLIDARITY





“ I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but **a citizen of the world.** ”

**Socrates**  
Ancient Greek



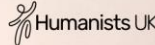
“ **The world is my country,** all mankind are my brethren, and **to do good is my religion.** ”

**Thomas Paine**  
English philosopher, founding father of the USA



AS A WOMAN I HAVE NO COUNTRY.  
AS A WOMAN I WANT NO COUNTRY.  
**AS A WOMAN, MY COUNTRY IS THE WHOLE WORLD.**

**VIRGINIA WOOLF**  
AUTHOR AND HUMANIST



## What do we all share?



 Humanists UK

**WE ARE FAR MORE UNITED, AND HAVE FAR MORE IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER THAN THINGS THAT DIVIDE US.**

**JO COX**  
POLITICIAN AND HUMANIST



# SOCIETY

A humanist vision



# THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE



# THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

'A just society is a society that if you knew everything about it, you'd be willing to enter it in a random place.'

**John Rawls, A Theory of Justice**



## A call to action

'Sex and race, because they are easy, visible differences, have been the primary ways of organising human beings into superior and inferior groups... We are talking about a society in which there will be no roles other than those chosen, or those earned. We are really talking about humanism.'

**Gloria Steinem, feminist and political activist**



# SOCIETY: SECULARISM

## Misconceptions

- Secularism is **not** atheism or antitheism

## What is secularism?

- Separation of religious and state institutions
- Freedom of religion or belief, and freedom to reject or change
- No privilege or discrimination on grounds of religion or belief – equal treatment

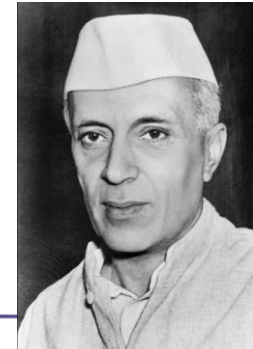


# SOCIETY: SECULARISM

The case for secularism?



You don't have to be a humanist to be a secularist



# SOCIETY

'It will never rain roses: when we want to have more roses we must plant more trees.'

**George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans), humanist and author**





# SOCIETY

'The world is before you and you need not take it or leave it as it was before you came in.'

**James Baldwin, author**





# Gulalai Ismail, human rights activist

‘For me, being a humanist is a **responsibility**. It is my responsibility to use my privilege, my power, and my resources to advocate for **human rights** for everyone. I have the responsibility to challenge unequal power structures and to make sure that everyone, especially young people and women, have the right to participate in the political processes.’

‘One of my humanist values, which has inspired me to work for human rights, is that **when I leave the world, I want to leave it in a better shape**. I don’t want the generations that would come after me to face the same kind of challenges that my generation has been facing.’



# Leo Igwe, human rights activist

‘What being a humanist means to me is taking a stand with **humanity**, taking a stand inspired by **human rights** and human values. Being a humanist means **campaigning for the betterment of humanity**, for human **emancipation**.’

‘Humanism is a way of thinking and living that emphasizes the **agency** of human beings. Humanism stresses the fact that we, human beings, are **capable of changing the world**. That we have the power to make a difference in our lives, both individually and collectively, without recourse to some outside force.’



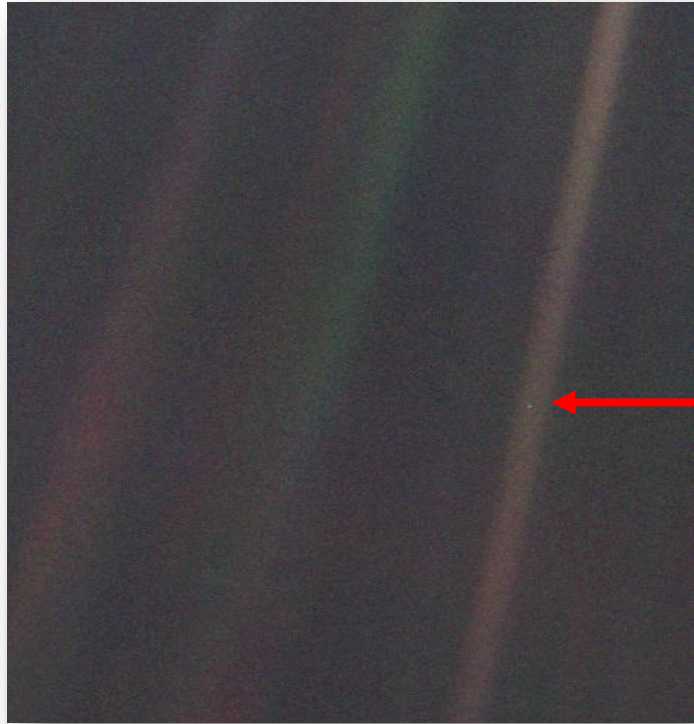
# The Starfish Thrower, Loren Eiseley



# The Starfish Story



# The pale blue dot



Earth



# THE PALE BLUE DOT



## CONCLUSIONS





# HUMANISM IN 5 THEMES

- 1) **The human being** (natural, potential)
- 1) **Understanding the world** (reason, science, atheism)
- 1) **The one life** (agency, happiness, freedom)
- 1) **Humanist ethics** (empathy, consequences, golden rule)
- 1) **Society: goals and action** (responsibility, human rights, secularism)



## RESOURCES



# UNDERSTANDING HUMANISM

- Teaching Resources
- School Speakers
- Core knowledge guide
- Teacher Training / CPD
- Online courses

[understandinghumanism.org.uk](http://understandinghumanism.org.uk)

[understandinghumanism.org.uk/speakers](http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/speakers)

[education@humanism.org.uk](mailto:education@humanism.org.uk)

Twitter: [@HumanismEdu](https://twitter.com/HumanismEdu)

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Understanding Humanism website. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the email address 'education@humanists.uk' on the left and the Twitter handle '@humanismedu' on the right. Below the header is the 'Understanding Humanism' logo, which features a stylized figure of a person with arms raised. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links for 'What is humanism?', 'Teaching about humanism', 'Resources', 'School speakers', 'Training', 'Online courses', and 'FAQs'. A 'DONATE' button is located on the far right of the navigation menu.

The main content area is divided into three sections. The left section is yellow and titled 'New resources!'. It contains the text: 'Check out our new resources organised into core areas of knowledge and sequenced across the age ranges.' Below this text is a 'FIND OUT MORE' button. The middle section is purple and features a collage of various educational resources, including a large set square, several open books, and a stack of papers. The right section is dark blue and contains the text: 'Humanists look for **natural** explanations for phenomena – they are atheists or agnostics.' Below this text is a 'LEARN MORE' button.

Below the main content area is a section titled 'TOP RESOURCES'. It features six purple boxes, each with a white icon and a label: a question mark for 'What is humanism?', a stylized figure for 'Human Beings', a magnifying glass for 'Understanding the World', a pencil for 'The One Life', a heart for 'Humanist Ethics', and a globe for 'Society'. Below these boxes is a link that says '...view all our resources'.

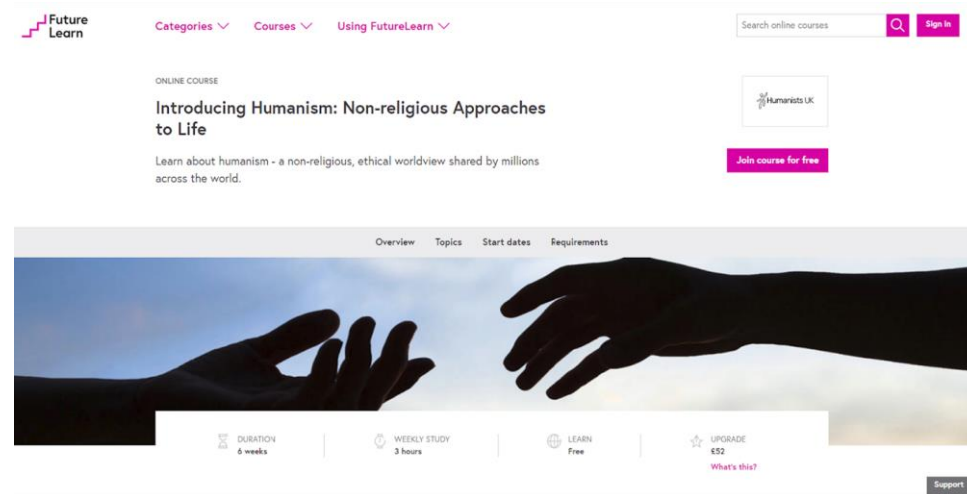


# THE MOOCS

Two free online courses on FutureLearn

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/introducing-humanism>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/humanist-lives>



The screenshot displays the FutureLearn website interface. At the top left is the FutureLearn logo. Navigation links for 'Categories', 'Courses', and 'Using FutureLearn' are visible. A search bar contains the text 'Search online courses' and a 'Sign In' button. The main content area features the course title 'Introducing Humanism: Non-religious Approaches to Life' and a brief description: 'Learn about humanism - a non-religious, ethical worldview shared by millions across the world.' A 'Join course for free' button is prominently displayed. Below the course information is a navigation menu with tabs for 'Overview', 'Topics', 'Start dates', and 'Requirements'. The main visual is a large image of two hands reaching towards each other against a blue sky. At the bottom, there are four icons representing course details: 'DURATION 6 weeks', 'WEEKLY STUDY 3 hours', 'LEARN Free', and 'UPGRADE £52' with a 'What's this?' link. A 'Support' button is located in the bottom right corner.



A large group of people, including men and women of various ages, are seated on a long bench in front of a building. They are dressed in formal attire, such as suits and dresses. The background shows a building with windows and trees. The image is faded to serve as a background for the text.

# Humanist Heritage

Exploring the rich **history** and  
influence of **humanism** in the UK

**ANY QUESTIONS?**

